GANDHI

As I Know Him

BY

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DANISH-MAHAL

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PREFACE

GANDHISM has proved to be a great disorganising force in the national struggle for freedom. Objectively it has played, all along, a most reactionary role in India.. It has, by an over-powering appeal to religion, superstition and blind faith—the pre-dominant traits of the ill-educated Indian mass-mind—submerged the political awakening of the Indian into the morass of spiritua-lism. Many stalwart workers who would have led the people in a real political fight against the domination of British Capital have been converted by that cult into so many hawkers of khaddar and seekers of jail-life on minor issues. It has blinded reason, tabooed critical faculty and waged a veritable war on intellect. Mahatma Gandhi has a rare genius in localising all movements that promise to be country-wide and directing the collective energy of the people into channels that flow counter to the broader aspects of the national struggle for freedom. He can lift, by the clever play of his politico-religious dialectics, side-issues to the height of para-mount importance, concentrate the minds of the masses on them and climb down at a moment when his own political 'Frankenstein' threatens to break the barriers disingenuously set by him. He can interpret defeat in terms of victory and conveniently shelve off the responsibility of his failures and surrenders to the shoulders of the nation. He may have the purest of motives at heart in starting this movement or that, but the consequences of his actions have always invariably entrenched the position of those whom he seeks to dislodge, and inflicted untold hardships on the people without the gain of a single point of vantage. His opposition to machinery, his advocacy of khaddar, his exhortations to the people to pray to God that Britain's heart be changed, his backing out from the widening political mass-movement on grounds of per-sonal idiosyncracy, his peculiar way of publicly maligning his own followers under cover of religious principles, his predilection to beat retreats in the thick of battle, his confirmed habit of putting the nation into the wrong box and giving opportunities to his British friends to damn Indians on his own authority, have only help-ed the Imperialists to consolidate their position. And in all this he has taken advantage of the simple credulity and religious faith of the people,

Now Gandhism has reached a stage when it becomes necessary to analyse its contents and unflinchingly indicate to the public all the immediate and remote implications of its undue spell on the mass-mind. The present book is an able attempt at such an analysis. Coming as it does from the pen of Mr. I. K. Yajnik, once a national worker in the foremost rank of Mr. Gandhi's followers, it assumes special importance as a first-hand and authoritative record of the great Mahatma's thinking and doing. Mr. Yajnik subjects, without the slightest tinge of bias, to a searching examination event after event that followed in the wake of the abortive Satyagraha Movement of 1921 organised by Mahatma Gandhi. Beginning from the arrival of Mr. Gandhi in India in 1914 fresh from his African *Satyagraha* and his active help to Britain in the world-war, down to his temporary retirement from politics on the failure of his civil-resistance experiment, Mr. Yajnik surveys the vast field of Gandhi's political activities with the unerring eye of a scientific observer and lays his finger on all the unhealthy repercussions of Gandhism with admirable exactitude. To put it in a nutshell the author has subjected Gandhism to Marxian searchlight and masterfully brought to light its reactionary role. To the mass of readers who are mostly under the blighting and anti-progressive influence of Gandhism, the book will perhaps come as a shock. But its real worth will go home to the public a decade or two hence, when the disintegrating anti-social force of Gandhism will have, by its egregious effects, disillusioned the masses.

To the politically minded section of the reading public and to those who have not wilfully, or otherwise, renounced their claims to reason, this book should have a powerful appeal. The thinking class will, it is hoped, anxiously await Mr. Yajnik's additional efforts to compass, in his studied survey, the entire field of Gandhi's activities up-to-date. The most important and, therefore, the most reactionary part of the Mahatma's leadership is the one which took the nation in its grip from 1928 and onwards, after his coming out from retirement to side-track the surging energies of the people. The present book contains a view analysis of all the events down to the year 1932 in the political life of India under Gandhi's leadership.

PUBLISHERS.

CONTENTS,

M.GANDHI AS I KNOW HIM

I

"HOME AT LAST"

IT WAS TOWARDS the end of 1914—a few months after the Great War began– that Mr. Gandhi landed in India.

His reputation of course preceded him. The last passive resistance struggle of the Indians in South Africa had caused a great ferment in India. The late Mr. Gokhale with the assistance of his band of devoted followers of "The Servants of India Society" had carried on a great propaganda in the country. Lord Hardinge, then Viceroy of India, had given his moral support to the movement in the course of his famous speech at Madras. Meetings had been held throughout the country, and hundreds of thousands of rupees had, been collected for the relief of the Indians, and their families, who had suffered in South Africa. The country was, therefore, prepared to give a warm welcome to the man who had succeeded in wielding his great instrument of civil disobedience with such signal success in a distant land.

We must also remember that by this time the younger generation had nearly lost all hope in the elder statesmen, including Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea. Mr. Gokhale, who was still highly respected in India, was lying ill in Poona. Lokamanya Tilak had just recently been released from Mandalay Jail after his incarceration of six years, and being still busy with his famous work on the *Gita* had not yet launched out into politics. Lala Lajpat Rai was away doing propaganda work in America, and Arabinda Ghose had secluded himself in Pondicherry. Mrs. Besant was just planning her Home Rule agitation, but had not yet begun active work. The way was, therefore, clear for a

new leader to stir the still waters of political life in India. And Mr. Gandhi really stepped in at a psychological moment.

We had all heard about Mr. Gandhi's matchless weapon of Civil Disobedience and soul force and thought much of its potentialities. I wrote a leading article about that time in the "Hindustan" welcoming Mr. Gandhi to our home land, and expressing great hopes about any movement that he might launch in India. Of course, we did not fully understand, as we do now, the implications of the new movement. We thought it would be somewhat militant in spirit and programme, even though we had to suffer without committing any violence. We thought that no sooner Mr. Gandhi landed in Bombay than he would give the word and India would be launched on the turbulent ocean of a new political movement.

These hopes, however, were not altogether unmixed with fears, because we had heard that soon after the outbreak of the Great War Mr. Gandhi had tried to form in England an Indian Ambulance Corps to help the British Government. The news was somewhat disconcerting to us, because we, of the younger generation, did not feel at all obliged to help the Government in a war which had nothing to do with the future of India. Perhaps we thought this was a clever move on Mr. Gandhi's part to give some young Indians experience of war tactics and to inculcate something of the manly and militant spirit which was so much in evidence in the Western world. We had also learnt that owing to the British Government not acceding to some claims put forward by Mr. Gandhi on behalf of his newly formed Ambulance Corps, he had boldly given them an ultimatum and threatened to withdraw his Corps from official control.

Mr. Gandhi came to India dressed in the simple clothes of a Gujrat peasant. He put on a *dhoti*, a loose coat reaching to his knees, a shoulder scarf and a Kathiawari turban—all made of rough Indian mill cloth—and sandals. This dress and his humble mien were commented on in the newspapers at the time of his arrival. There were no large crowds to greet him at the Bundar. But although he was quietly received on his return to India after a lapse of twenty years or so, all the Indian newspapers published

long articles warmly praising the distinguished services that he had rendered in the cause of Indians in South Africa, and expressing great hopes of his future services to the cause of India's freedom.

We also heard vague rumours about the sense of awe and fear that he inspired in Government circles. We heard of the many spies that dogged his steps at the Bundar. We also heard of his interview with Lord Willingdon, who was then the Governor of Bombay. Since then he had himself told us how Lord Willingdon particularly asked him at that juncture to bring to his notice any specific grievances that he might have against Government before making up his mind to embark on any agitation.

Naturally, there was a great stir in Bombay Presidency and especially in the province of Gujrat on his arrival. Gujrat had hardly ever before any political leader of All-India fame. Now we had Mr. Gandhi coming to stay in our midst, to teach politics to us in our own language, to espouse our grievances, to lead our fights against the Government, and to give us a distinguished place in the political life of the country.

Above all he fired the hearts and kindled the imaginations of the younger generation as he embodied within himself the twin principles of religion and politics. Fighting saints and religious crusaders have made great marks in the history of mediaeval Europe. So have they, though in a somewhat different manner, in mediaeval India. Ramdas and Guru Nanak, great religious teachers, taught militant principles that eventually brought about the political rise of the Mahrattas and the Sikh peoples.

We had also seen this combination in Mr. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, who used their great resources of religious and philosophical erudition to enforce their political doctrines. But they had passed their meridian and Mr. Gandhi came on the scene, a saint and a politician in one, humble in mien and simple to all appearances, but full of a great message that we all thought would create a momentous revolution in the political life of the country.

II

A WET BLANKET

I WAS anxious to see the Mahatma in person. An opportunity soon presented itself. There was a reception to be held in his honour by the residents of Santa Cruz near Bombay in the Villar Villa bungalow. So I decided to go there with my friends of Santa Cruz to hear the living voice and message of the Holy Man.

Some of us, Indians, with an English education, were dressed in the long Indian coat, English trousers and Indian cap, fitting symbols of our half Eastern and half Western mentality.

I was a little late in arriving on the scene. For, as I went up to the upper floor of the building, I saw Mr. Gandhi sitting on a big mattress surrounded by hundreds of people while the proceedings were in full swing. After the address of welcome was over Mr. Gandhi rose to speak. My curiosity and enthusiasm rose to the highest pitch. My heart was thumping within me. He began in a very quiet, low voice—he was, perhaps, not audible to all in the big hall. He thanked the organisers of the reception for their kindness and courtesy and then in a characteristic manner begged them to believe that he did not deserve the flattering compliments which had been showered on him. He would make a humble endeavour to be worthy of these compliments as far as possible. He was almost afraid that these fulsome praises would spoil him. And that was all.

All this came to me as a great shock. I did not hear a word about the grievances of India and South Africa. Nor did he utter a single syllable about the fight that he had lately had with the military authorities of Great Britain. And he did not give the slightest idea of his views on the political situation in India. I had expected him to give a clarion call to the down-trodden people of this country, to rise up for a non-violent fight against the dark

forces of Government oppression. I had expected him to speak in the vein of Mr. Tilak or Arabinda Ghose. But he only uttered a few conventional phrases and resumed his seat.

It was a terrible disappointment to me. It shattered all the hopes that I had reposed in his unfathomable potentialities. It was really more than I could stand and I was so thoroughly dumbfounded and miserable over the whole matter that I hurriedly left the meeting and almost ran to my friends' house. Some friends I met on the way asked me why I was returning before the conclusion of the reception. I hardly answered them—I was choking with rage and indignation—I could not explain it to myself—I went post haste—away from Mr. Gandhi who had thoroughly disappointed me.

But still I hoped against hope. And presently the Gujrat Sabha, of which I was the Secretary, decided to hold a big meeting to welcome Mr. Gandhi in the Mangaldas House. Mr. M. A. Jinnah consented to preside. As we had also arranged for refreshments we had to enquire what Mr. Gandhi would take. We then learned that he lived on fruits and nuts and we procured these and arranged a separate table for him.

This meeting was held in the garden of the big house. A few hundred people were present. Mr. Munshi made the first speech in English to welcome Mr. Gandhi "the greatest son of modern Gujrat." Then Mr. Jinnah made a fairly fighting political speech. After warmly praising the great struggle that Mr. Gandhi had waged for the emancipation of the Indians in South Africa he warned us all that these Indians were not yet at the end of their difficulties and further struggles would be necessary to settle their problem.

Then Mr. Gandhi rose to speak. He sprung a pleasant surprise upon us all by speaking in Gujrati. He naturally dwelt on the urgent necessity of discarding the use of the English language in our national and political work and substituting for it the use of the provincial language or Hindustani in order to appeal to the masses of people. But he hardly told us anything

more. He deliberately refrained from touching even on the South African problem to which Mr. Jinnah had made such pointed reference in his speech. Nor did he say a word about Indian politics. He only thanked us very heartily for all the good things that Mr. Munshi and Mr. Jinnah had said about him and he wished he was worthy of the great praises that had been showered on him.

So after he had partaken of the frugal meal of nuts and fruits the party ended rather late in the evening.

It was again a disappointment to me and all my colleagues in the Association. Some friends started making fun of Mr. Gandhi's plain appearance, of his humble mien and of his peasant dress which, in their opinion, made him look almost like an Indian tailor.

For many months we heard hardly anything of Mr. Gandhi's activities, either privately or in the Press. But we did learn that he had decided on Mr. Gokhale's adivce to observe complete silence on Indian politics for at least a year. He intended to tour round the whole of India to study social economics and politics in the different provinces. Then we read that while visiting Madras he attended an English missionary gathering and he spoke in support of a toast to the British Empire.

So while Mr. Gandhi would not say a word to rouse the people from their political apathy or start an agitation for the redress of people's grievances against the Government, he would swear loyalty to the Empire which was crushing us under its burden. This confirmed our initial suspicions and deepened our sense of disappointment. We realized that he was not the leader we thought he was.

In the beginning of 1915 Mr. Gandhi decided to make Ahmedabad his headquarters and he started his Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati with the help of some rich friends.

III

A SLUMBERING VOLCANO?

MR. GANDHI had already adopted Mr. Gokhale as his political Guru He had always evinced the highest respect and admiration for the Moderate leader. Their relations, social and political, had been deepened and intensified since Mr. Gokhale's visit to South Africa. Even while in England Mr. Gandhi had solemnly announced his decision to follow in Mr. Gokhale's footsteps, and almost immediately on his arrival in India Mr. Gokhale had admitted him as a probationary member of the "Servants of India Society."

All this was not encouraging to us. Although Mr. Gokhale was still highly popular in India he was after all a mere Moderate. Mr. Tilak, on the other hand, on his release from jail very soon gave promise of re-organising his Extremist party that had practically become extinct since 1907. So while the younger generation continued to respect Gokhale, their hopes were centred on the great Extremist leader, who was about to re-enter politics after his long imprisonment. We had expected that Mr. Gandhi would at least wait some time before identifying himself with Mr. Gokhale's party. But he quickly chose his path and practically ranged himself against the Extremist section led by Mr. Tilak.

Mr. Gokhale died at Poona on the 19th February 1915. Mr. Gandhi quickly returned from Shantiniketana to Poona to take part in his funeral ceremonies. Again the question of his being admitted into the fold of the "Servants of India Society" as a full member was discussed by the members but no decision was arrived at.

Mr. Gokhale's death cast a gloom over the whole country. I remember that even I was deeply moved in company with many of my friends: and we all thought we should do something to fill

up the breach that had been caused by the death of the great Moderate leader. We forgot his weaknesses and we continued to lament his death which had no doubt been hastened by his continuous hard work, in spite of his failing health, in the cause of the country. I very soon resolved to throw up my career at the Bar and to join the "Servants of India Society." So I decided to go to Poona to attend the Bombay Provincial Conference with a view to get into personal touch with active politics, and see the work of the Society at Poona.

Mr. Gandhi also came to attend the Conference that year. He put up in the Home of the Society where I was also staying during the Session. He removed all the chairs and tables that were allotted to him in the Guest House, and preferred to see people and to work sitting on a carpet. I had then some more opportunities of coming into close contact with him. But though I still continued to regard him as a slumbering volcano, I do not remember to have received any fiery shock from him.

He was not an important figure at the Conference. He only spoke once or twice at the Conference on a resolution lamenting the sad demise of Mr. Gokhale. I heard that he was more busily engaged in bringing about a "rapproachment" between the Congress party then represented by Mr. Gokhale's Moderate section and Mr. Tilak's Extremist Party. He went to pay his respects to Mr. Tilak but nothing came of it. On the whole I regarded the Conference as a thoroughly tame and lifeless affair, which could only be enlivened by the magnetism of Mr. Tilak and his strong Nationalist following.

On my return from Poona I started the magazine "Navajivan" and "Satya"—which was handed over to Mr. Gandhi in 1919, and which he still continues to edit as the Gujarati Weekly "Navajivan."

Almost immediately after, I joined "The Servants of India Society" as a probationer, and so I was brought more intimately into personal contact with Mr. Gandhi.

I was very anxious to draw him out of his retirement in Ahmedabad and make him say something on a few political problems of the day. Messrs. McNeill and Chimanalal had just submitted their report to the Government of India about the condition of Indians in South Africa. So I hit upon the plan of arranging Mr. Gandhi's lecture on the report in Bombay. I humbly approached him on the subject and he readily accepted my offer. He came down to Bombay on the appointed day and put up in the Society's House there. I was also staying there at that time.

A queer thing happened in the evening. Being busily engaged with making arrangements for the big meeting at the Gaiety Theatre I forgot to take Mr. Gandhi there. I was, therefore, painfully surprised to learn afterwards that he had walked the whole distance from Girgaum House to the Theatre. This incidentally shows how he was then comparatively insignificant, and also how humble he was in not asking for any conveyance to take him to the meeting.

Yet again, strange as it may seem, the theatre was packed to its full capacity. Mr, Petit, as the President of the South African Indian Relief Association, presided on this occasion. Mr. Gandhi spoke for nearly an hour on his pet subject. It was the longest speech I had ever heard him make so far. But it was not inspiring. He really spoke as an expert on the Indian question and analysed in a calm and dispassionate manner, the various recommendations that Messrs. McNeill and Chimanlal had made.

I considered it my duty to take Mr. Gandhi from the theatre to the Colaba station, to enable him to take the train for Ahmedabad that night. So I requested Mr. Jamnadas Dwarakadas to be so good to as drive Mr. Gandhi to the station in his car. He readily acceded to my request and it was while we were driving to the station that I had the first interesting snatch of conversation with Mr. Gandhi.

We somehow began to talk about his popularity in India. Probably we asked him if he thought it possible to get a large and

influential following for his campaign of Civil Disobedience in the country at some future date. He made a most characteristic reply:—"I am not very much worried", he said, "about securing a large following. That will come in due course. But I do anticipate that a time may come when my large following may throw me overboard on account of my strict adhesion to my principles—which they may fail to understand—and it may be that I shall almost be turned out on the streets and have to beg for a piece of bread from door to door, and I might not even be able to get that." These words somehow left a deep impression on my mind. I was surprised that he could dream of creating a vast following any time he pleased—with a magician's wand as it were—and that he should be so imaginative as to dream of the day when he would be turned out and stoned by his nearest followers.

Anyhow it confirmed my original impression of Mr. Gandhi burning with an unquenchable fire within himself to right the wrongs of the country, even though he continued to present such a quiet appearance.

Presently we arrived at the station and I handed him a ten rupee note to cover his travelling expenses. He thougtfully accepted it and said "Well, I don't mind taking the amount as I am still a probationer member of your Society.' And the train steamed away from the platform as I was watching his inscrutable smile.

IV

AT THE TAIL-END!

BY THAT TIME Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement was in full swing. Her day to day articles in her paper "New India" were firing our hearts with new enthusiasm. She insisted on Home Rule being granted to India, partly in order to redress the grave wrongs that had been done to our country by Britain, and partly to reward us for the great services that we had rendered during the War. She exhorted Indians to lose no time in organising themselves and agitating on this question throughout the country. She, of course, wanted the Congress to take up the question, but as the Congress was at that time a slow ramshackle machine, she wanted to organise a separate party called the Home Rule League to agitate for Indian Home Rule.

After seeing Mr. Tilak at Poona she came down to Bombay. The younger generation was naturally deeply impressed by her fiery propaganda. It was really under her influence that I helped my friends Messrs. Banker and Jamnadas Dwarakadas to start the English weekly "Young India"—which again we handed over to Mr. Gandhi in 1919 and which has now become world-famous under his editorship.

The Indian National Congress was to be held in Bombay during the Christmas Week of 1915. Preparations for holding the session were in full swing. Lord Sinha, then Sir Satyendra Parsanna Sinha, the ex-member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, had been elected to preside over the session. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was the President of the Bombay Reception Committee. However, he died almost on the eve of the Congress session. The great Moderate leader being thus out of the way, Mrs. Besant decided to call a private Conference of some elderly politicians and younger enthusiasts to consider the question of inaugurating a new body called the Home Rule League,

Mr. Sastri, the president of our Society, was also very much impressed with the urgent necessity of following Mrs. Besant's lead. But the star of the Society had been hitched to the wagon of the Moderate party, and so Mr. Sastri felt depressed and helpless though he continued to confer privately with Mrs. Besant. Mr. Gandhi, however, was quite out of sympathy with Mrs. Besant's project and was not invited to her Conference. The conclusion of the Conference showed divided counsels and it broke up without any tangible result.

Then came the Congress session itself. Mr. Gandhi came down to Bombay to attend it and put up in the Marwari Vidyalaya Hall which had recently been built. He came with a small party of his followers, and lived there in a simple fashion. Not many people came to see him. Some young students and religious enthusiasts called on him. His abode generally presented a quite appearance. I remember that Pandit Malaviya went to confer with him but such visits of principal political leaders were more the exception than the rule.

Mr. Gandhi hardly played an important part in the Congress. He was given a seat at the very end of the long Presidential table. Even in the Subjects Committee his advice was specially sought on the South African Indian question. He spoke on the subject in the open session of the Congress.

Yet most momentous questions of the Constitutional progress of India were raised and discussed in the Subjects Committee of the Congress which eventually decided to appoint a committee, to frame, in co-operation with a similar committee to be appointed by the All-India Muslim League, a draft of the new Constitution of India for being presented to the British Government as the united demand of the Indian people.

There was another grave decision taken during that session. At the urge of a special committee appointed at the previous session at Madras the Constitution of the Congress was so amended as to facilitate the re-entry of Mr. Tilak's Party. We heard that Mr. Gandhi helped in bringing about this settlement. But on the

whole his contribution to the proceedings of this important session may be deemed thoroughly insignificant.

Yet today—after a lapse of sixteen eventful years-Mr. Gandhi is the master of India's millions and is practically the sole dictator of the Indian National Congress.

How he built up his popularity in the country and his power in the Congress, I shall relate in the following chapters.

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V

COUNSELS OF REACTION!

EVEN BEFORE I joined the "Servants of India Society" I was suspected of harbouring Extremist tendencies. By the end of 1915 these tendencies became more pronounced. Our "Young India" like Mrs. Besant's "New India" was every week bombarding the old Moderate leaders and calling upon them to lead a new agitation for Home Rule. My friends were more openly organising meetings aud demonstrations where Extremist views were being thundered forth nearly every day. My friends in the Society were thus rendered very uncomfortable by my private and public Extremist propaganda and they finally decided to transfer me to the Nagpur branch of the Society,

It was at Nagpur in the winter of 1916, that I learned from a private circular of the Society that it had finaliy decided not to admit Mr. Gandhi as a member.

But I resolved to return to Bombay and work there at the earliest opportunity. Therefore, taking a few weeks' leave, I went there. By this time Mrs. Besant had organised an "All India Home Rule Propaganda Board" and several Extremist pamphlets had been published by it. Provincial branches of the Board had also been organised in Madras, Bombay, United Provinces and Bengal. My friends of the "Young India" group were wsorking on the Bombay Committee of this Board and at their request I wrote several pamphlets in Gujrati to spread the burning up pet of Home Rule among the towns and villages of Gujrat. These pamphlets were distributed at big meetings in their hundreds and thousands. Thousands of people flocked to these meetings and the enthusiasm evinced and the literature consumed from day to day pointed to the rising tide of political enthusiasm in Bombay as well as in the country side.

Fresh with these impressions I went to Ahmedabad. I realiy wanted to start some political organisations for Gujrat, but I decided first to organise a Gujrat Educational Conference simultaneously with the forthcoming session of the Bombay Provincial Conference which was to be held in Ahmedabad towards the end of 1916. After meeting with some difficulties from the local leaders I finally secured the help of the Gokhale Society of Ahmedabad to convene this Conference within the next few months.

I then went to pay my respects to Mr. Gandhi at his Ashram. Mr. Gandhi was then living in a small bungalow near the Kocharab village on the Sarkhej Road. He was living as usual in very simple style, together with his followers, most of whom were engaged in manual labour. The National School had not then been started. There was no political atmosphere round the Ashram at all and everything looked very quiet. Mr. Gandhi himself used to pass his time sometimes sewing or mending clothes, sometimes weaving on a small hand-loom which had been set up in an outhouse, and sometimes nursing patients. There was a small collection of books which he had brought from South Africa; but the library was desolate and there was about it no atmosphere of the study or discussion of political questions that so deeply interested me at the "Servants of India Societys'" Home at Poona.

After paying my respects to Mr. Gandhi I tried to draw him out on the political situation. But he would not respond to my efforts. He had absolutely set his face against all political agitation for the moment and was also distrustful of Mrs. Besant. He really thought that Home Rule activities, if not quite mischievous, were not calculated to do any good to India. So I was again disappointed in not getting any political guidance or initiative that I was so anxiously expecting from him.

But I heard some things at the Ashram which somehow gave promise of Mr. Gandhi's future activities in politics. Swami Satyadev was then staying with him. He was a political firebrand and had gone to the Ashram in search of real political inspiration. Therefore on discussing the matter with him he told me of Mr.

Gandhi's characteristic reply to a question he had put to him. " I asked Mr. Gandhi" he said, "how his doctrine of non-violence would help us to protect the North West frontier against the invasions of the turbulent Pathan tribesmen, And he gave a very curious reply. 'All that you want to do', he said, 'is to train an army of strictly non-violent men who would offer themselves as willing sacrifices to the fury of the tribesmen and over whose corpses these tribesmen must tread before entering the gates of India. But I am sure that these chivalrous men would hate to strike and kill such non resisting Satyagrahis and their stout hearts would, therefore, easily succumb to the mighty powers of truth and love. So you see in my opinion India would be better protected by such Satyagrahis than by a mighty army armed and equipped with the latest ammunitions and machine guns".

These words revealed to me Mr. Gandhi's unflinching faith in his principle of non-violence in the face of military danger, and I again felt that he was holding his force in leash only with a view to let it out at the earliest opportune moment. I was further confirmed in my belief when I heard that Thoreau's book on civil resistance was being read in the Ashram every evening. I was convinced that he would start his fight as soon as he was sure of a sufficient number of people who would follow him unflinchingly on the path of political resistance tempered with spiritual love.

Within a few days I returned to Nagpur. But I was again happy to see the Mahatma at Poona on the anniversary of our Society on June the 12th. This was really an important meeting of the Society. For Mr. Sastri decided to mobilise the whole Society for carrying on a vigorous Home Rule propaganda throughout the country. The large majority of members agreed with him on this subject. Only a few, though very important, members from Bombay and Poona who had joined the Society at its very inception opposed it, as they thought it would land the Society into serious troubles and take it away from the path that its founder Mr. Gokhale had chalked out for it.

We gathered together as usual in the big library hall of the Society on the morning of the 12th June. Besides members an

associates, some distinguished friends and sympathisers were present. Mr. Gandhi also attended the meeting. The atmosphere was quite tense and solemn. Mr. Sastri opened the proceedings with a fairly long, reasoned and powerful speech. He reviewed at some length the great help that India had rendered to England in the Great War in men and money. He pointed out to members the urgent necessity of capturing and canalising the new political spirit that was in evidence all over the country. He also proved that his plan was thoroughly consistent with the principles on which Mr. Gokhale had founded the Society. He further added that if they let slip the opportunity now they would only be dragged into the current eventually, and would get no credit for any services, however substantial, that they might render afterwards.

Many leading members supported Mr. Sastri—a few opposed him. Then Mr. Gandhi rose and made a most reactionary speech. He did not dispute India's right to self-government or Home Rule. He was quite prepared to treat the British Government as an enemy power. But he would be chivalrous even to an enemy. This enemy was embroiled in a most serious world war against Great Powers. Even if he could not help he would not do anything to trouble or embarrass the Government at a time when it was engaged in a life-and death struggle. He would wait till the war was over and then would be quite prepared to start any movement that he deemed necessary to secure the rights of our people.

Of course, the speech fell absolutely flat on the meeting. And Mr. Sastri had no difficulty in the course of his concluding speech, in showing that Indians need not hesitate to strike while the iron was hot, as the people of self-governing colonies like Canada and Australia were pressing hard their claims to full powers within the Imperial Federation even during the continuance of the war on the strength of the great help that they had rendered to Britain during the early years of the war. So even this Moderate body practically resolved to launch on the Home Rule agitation in spite of the nervousness of a few members and the opposition of some friends like Gandhi.

VI

THE FIRST SUCCESS

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS Mrs. Besant launched her "All India Home Rule Organisation" in co-operation with Mr. Tilak at Poona. Provincial and local branches began to be established all over India, and especially in the Madras and Bombay Presidencies. Huge mass meetings, the like of which we had hardly seen before, became the order of the day. Messrs. Tilak, and Hornimann and some other local leaders used to harangue thousands of enthusiastic people in open meetings. The Home Rule movement caught on everywhere like wildfire. Pamphlets and other literature were published and distributed in vast quantities and the Home Rule newspapers increased their circulation by leaps and bounds.

My friends of the "Young India" group began to organise the Bombay branch of the Home Rule League on a very big and extensive scale. They tried to induce new local leaders, who had not been associated with the old Moderate school, to join them. They also tried to persuade Mr. Gandhi to join them, but their efforts proved unavailing.

Soon afterwards the Bombay Provincial Conference was held at Ahmedabad under the presidentship of Mr. M. A. Jinnah. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad presided over the Gujarat Educational Conference. These meetings served to evoke great enthusiasm in the Province of Gujrat which had till then been considered backward in political movements. On the whole the Conference was a much more lively affair than the previous year's session at Poona. Mr. Gandhi attended both the Conferences and spoke on some formal matters and minor Resolutions. But he hardly said anything to affect or help the decision of the two Conferences.

I was then transferred temporarily to Lucknow to help the preparations for the forthcoming session of the Indian National Congress to be held during the Christmas week. I was astonished

to find tremendous enthusiasm in the United Provinces regarding the question of the immediate grant of a Home Rule Constitution to India. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was then busy touring the whole Province and addressing large and enthusiastic meetings on the subject. He, as well as Pandit Gokaran Natha Misra, addressed huge mass meetings at the Aminabad Park at Lucknow, exhorting the people to rally under the Home Rule flag and help to make the Congress a ringing success.

The Congress week arrived. Thousands of delegates poured in from all part of the country to attend the historic session. Mr. Tilak came with his large contingent of Deccan and C. P. Delegates to attend the Congress after a lapse of nine years—on account of the compromise that had been arrived at in Bombay. He naturally was the hero and chief attraction of the Congress. He received overwhelming applause when he appeared on the platform. His clarion call, for the establishment of self-government in India, evoked thundering cheers from the thousands assembled in the Congress.

Meanwhile the leaders of the Congress and the Moslem League had been holding private meetings in order to arrive at a settlement of the communal problem. There were some difficult moments when the prospects of the settlement appeared to be really doubtful. But the spirit of compromise and the sturdy nationalism prevailed at last and the Committees of both the bodies succeeded in evolving a joint scheme of self-government. The scheme, known as the Congress League Scheme, was simultaneously adopted in the open session of the Congress and the Muslim League. And it is a matter of history that the terms of the communal settlement were adopted almost entirely in the Montague Chelmsford report and finally incorporated in the new Constitutional reforms of 1919.

Mr. Gandhi again played a very minor part in this historic session. It was rumoured that he informally advised some of the zealous Hindu leaders to unbend a little more in settling the communal problem with the Moslem leaders. But so far as the Subjects Committee and the open sessions were concerned he preferred to remain a silent, though certainly an attentive, listener.

Mr. Gandhi was not, however, blind to the signs of the times. Up till then in the few speeches that he had made in Gujrat as well as in other parts of the country, he had dwelt more on the social problems—the curse of early marriage, untouchability, a tyranny of the priestly class, and the caste-system, and more particularly on the vices of the several so-called religious practices. It was freely rumoured in our Society that he at that time felt that he was at the parting of the ways. Whatever his personal opinions regarding the merits of carrying on a political crusade against Government, he felt that the rising tide of political awakening and enthusiasm of the masses under the pressure of the Great War left him no alternative but to make up his mind then and there. He must definitely decide either to take the path of religious and social reform—his activities in this direction had indeed met with very little response from the people—cr he must take the political tide at its flood and launch some political movement, however, limited in scope, and however different from the Home Rule agitation that was then sweeping over the country. I believe that he rightly read the signs of the times at the Lucknow session and it was practically about this time that he decided to lead the political tide that was then rising in the country in his own characteristic manner.

It is indeed true that he had been corresponding even before the Lucknow session with the Government of India on the question of indentured labour and the Viramgam Customs cordon. But I believe I am not far from the truth when I say that it was really at Lucknow that he took the momentous decision of plunging, in however a restricted manner, into the active political life of the country.

As he himself mentions in his autobiography, it was at the Lucknow session that one Rajkumar Shukla requested him to go to Champaran in Behar to see for himself the distress of the miserable tenants who were suffering under the atrocious oppression of the English planters. It is also noteworthy that Babu Vrajakishore Prasad—a lawyer of Champaran who afterwards distinguished himself in the Tenants' campaign as Mr Gandhi's chief

lieutenant—succeeded in moving a Resolution at the Congress that the Congress should express sympathy for the people of Champaran. Yet Mr. Gandhi told Mr. Shukla that he could give no opinion without seeing the conditions with his own eyes and requested him to leave him free for the moment to consider the matter. Eventually Mr. Gandhi promised to include Champaran in his forthcoming tour and give it a day or two. Yet it was only when he was at Calcutta early in 1917 that he finally settled the exact date of his visit to Champaran. And when he went there he was so impressed by the pitiable state of the peasants and merciless oppression of the planters and the Government that he was compelled to continue his work in that Province off and on for two years and more.

Meanwhile on my return to Bombay in January, 1917 I succeeded in persuading Mr. Gandhi to visit Godhra, a small town in Gujrat, for celebrating the anniversary of Mr. Gokhale's death on the 19th February. I met Mr. Gandhi at the Godhra station. He was carried through the streets of that small town in a triumphal procession. It was, perhaps, the first time in his life that he has had that honour in India. Men and women, Hindus and Mahomedans, gathered in hundreds to honour the great saint who had come to their home town. Mr. Gandhi addressed two big meetings in the town. At the first meeting he spoke of the life work and the message of the departed patriot. Of course, the speech was not designed to rouse militant political enthusiasm. It was calculated more to instruct and educate the people. Only the following sentence in it impressed me very much :

> "There is a tide of great political enthusiasm now running all over the country, nearly as big and wide as the Ganges in flood. But the tide is running to waste for want of people's control".

He meant that the tide had to be gathered and led into fruitful channels. He thus recognised the existence of a more or less revolutionary ferment that hath set in all over the country and he appeared to have now made up his mind to do what he could to lead this enthusiasm into such practical channels as would bear tangible and useful results.

The other meeting gave still greater promise of Mr. Gandhi's emergence into practical politics. He addressed us on the system of indentured labour under which thousands of Indian labourers were induced to leave their homeland for South Africa and other British Colonies to work practically as slaves. He narrated in vivid terms the miseries and oppression of these people in South Africa and asked those people to support his Resolution to end this barbaric system. But he did not content himself with a general vague Resolution such as we were accustomed to adopt at the ordinary political meetings. He introduced a definite time limit into the Resolution requesting the Government to stop this system of slavery by issuing a special ordinance before the 31st May, 1917. The novelty of this Resolution—which was practically worded like an ultimatum—inspired and impressed us. Mr. Gandhi told us "Remember then the 31st May. The time limit is not without its meaning. If Government does not take necessary measures within the appointed time you must be prepared to suffer, to go to prison or even to die in order to redress the grievous wrong".

He spoke these words in a cool and collected voice but I was greatly impressed by the warmth of militant fire that had been kindled in his heart. I saw that now at last he was out for battle, and somehow felt nervous about the steps he would take if the Government did not comply with his demands before the 31st May.

Nor would he content himself with moving such a Resolution at one meeting only. He prevailed on the Imperial Citizenship Association of Bombay to adopt a similar Resolution, and also induced Mrs. Petit to lead an Indian Ladies' Deputation to press the claim personally on the Viceroy. He was also in private correspondence with Simla and he probably felt he was on a firm footing when he was pressing this demand from all quarters.

Within a few weeks I went to Mesopotamia as a member of a British Indian party of journalists sent out by Government to report on the conditions of the Indian army in that war zone. It was when I was in a hospital at Amara (115 miles from Basra) suffering from pneumonia that I read in an Indian newspaper that

the Government had issued the necessary ordinance to stop indentured labour in April. Thus Mr. Gandhi had really succeeded in securing his first victory in India.

Very soon aferwards I was surprised to see another headline in another Indian newspaper announcing that Mr. Gandhi was in trouble. I found that by this time he had gone to Champaran to enquire into the grievances of the tenants and had refused to comply with an order of the Commissioner of the Division asking him to leave the territory within twenty-four hours.

I shall, therefore, now turn to Gandhi's work in Champaran.

VII

REFORMISM IN CHAMPARAN

"CHAMPARAN", writes Mr. Gandhi in his autobiography, is the land of King Janaka (a mythological Hindu king and the father of the Hindu Goddess Sita) which abounds in mango groves just as it used to be full of indigo plantations until the year 1917. The Champaran tenant was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as the Tinkatia system as three katahs out of twenty (which make one acre) had to be planted with indigo." It was this system and the evils associated with it that he went to destroy.

But his words do not reveal the full magnitude of the evil in Champaran, Champaran is one of the districts of the province of Behar. Like most other parts of the Province the land in this district is held by big landlords who used to let it out in turn to poor peasants on the most usurious and oppressive terms. The district was divided into 2,841 villages which had a total population of about 1,900,000 souls. Most of the people were semi-starved, illiterate and miserable peasants groaning under the oppression of the landlords. The position was further complicated by the fact that many of these landlords, worried over the terrible debts that they had incurred, had sold or let out their rights over certain parts of the lands to English planters. These planters found indigo cultivation and indigo trade very profitable to themselves in the latter half of the last century and introduced a system whereby they could compel their tenants to grow indigo in a fixed portion of the land. The tenants found indigo cultivation thoroughly unprofitable and therefore they were always more or less in a state of revolt against the planters. So the area of compulsory cultivation had to be reduced from five kathas to three in 1867. Even so the planters advanced varying sums of money to the tenants to enable or compel them to cultivate indigo even to

this limited extent. The planters paid only Rs. 6½ per acre of indigo plantation to the tenants. The sum was increased to Rs. 9 in 1867, under pressure from Government. The tenants still remained in a state of discontent which occasionally broke out into riots and hence the amount of compensation was increased to Rs. 12 in 1897 and to Rs. 13½ in 1909. At the same time a promise had been made to remit the full amount of rent due on the lands planted with indigo but it was never fulfilled.

There were many other systems of tenancy prevailing in the district. For instance, the Commissioner of the Patna division wrote about another kind of lease as follows :

"The Kurtali lease is a new institution commencing a few years back . ... . it has grown up in our midst and in spite of our efforts of beneficient legislation the system under which the ryot mortgages his entire holding within the very sight of his own house for a period probably extending over the length of his lifetime, has flourished, redemption being contingent on the repayment of the loan. The ryot, to use the common expression, is selling himself body and soul into hopeless servitude".

The English planters found indigo plantations so profitable to themselves that they compelled the tenants to grow indigo on about 95,970 acres of land every year during the years 1892 to 1899. About thirty-three thousand labourers were then engaged in indigo factories. But the German artificial indigo appeared on the market at the beginning of the present century and seriously reduced the planters' profits. The effect of the German competition was soon revealed in the shrinking acreage of indigo cultivation in Champaran. The area of indigo plantations dwindled down to 47,800 acres in 1905 and to only 100 acres in 1914. The beginning of the Great War, and the consequent stoppage of the German indigo trade, however, turned the scales in Behar. Hence the area of indigo plantations again rose to 21,900 acres in 1916 and to 26,848 acres in 1917.

So Mr. Gandhi really went to Champaran in order to prevent the further growth of indigo cultivation which had almost been

reduced to nothing just before the War. Further, during the period of the first fourteen years of this century when planters found their profits fast dwindling, they began to impose a novel tax on the tenants who were cultivating less and less indigo. Therefore, Mr. Gandhi set out to abolish the compulsory system of indigo plantation and also the additional tax which had been levied on the tenants for letting them grow what they liked on the land let out to them—at a time when indigo cultivation had been saved from complete extinction by the accident of the War. It is also necessary to remember that the tenants had often enough during the course of the last 40 or 50 years broken out into riots against the English planters- and had often killed or wounded their agents and burned their houses and factories. These ebullitions of popular frenzy had in their turn compelled Government to make enquiries into the peasants' grievances and to re-adjust the planters' claims at every turn. The outbreak of the War and the renewed compulsion to grow indigo created a new ferment among the tenants who had already given no uncertain signs of breaking out into violent riots if no immediate steps were taken to redress their wrongs.

It was at this stage that Mr. Gandhi entered the field. The ignorant peasants naturally flocked round him in thousands. The Government and the planters grew nervous at Mr. Gandhi's activities and enquiries, and the Commissioner thought it best to eject Mr. Gandhi from the district. Mr. Gandhi knew that in spite of all appearances to the contrary he was doing nothing of a revolutionary character. He had gone there only for an enquiry into some specific grievances of the tenants and not for the eradication or overthrow of the double system of landlords and planters which had practically reduced the tenants to the position of slaves. In other words, he had gone there to have a re-adjustment made of the landlords' system, more or less in conformity with similar changes and reforms which had been made before by the Government itself in response to the tenants' riots.

In spite of the extremely modest object of Mr. Gandhi in going to Champaran, the 18th April, 1917 was a Red Letter day

for India. On that day Mr. Gandhi appeared in the Magistrate's Court, pleaded guilty to having disobeyed the order of the Commissioner to leave Champaran and made a most remarkable statement, which was widely reproduced and commented upon in the Nationalist Press India. His main point was that he had entered the district "with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service" and "to study the peasants" conditions with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and planter". He also stated: "As a law, abiding citizen my first instinct would be to obey the order served on me, but that I could not do without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come". And he concluded his statement with the following words: "I am fully conscious of the fact that a person holding the position as I do in the public life of India has to be careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution in which we are living the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, under the circumstances, such a one as faces me. That is, to do what I have decided to do—submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience".

Mr. Gandhi has truly stated that "the country thus had its first direct object lesson in civil disobedience". His action and statement surprised the nation. People wondered at the extraordinary courage and heroism of the Saint Politician who had at last begun his great campaign against the British Government. They thought that he was a great revolutionary leader.

But they were mistaken. Mr. Gandhi was not a revolutionary leader, but a moderate at heart. He wanted to keep his movement within very limited circle. He had decided that nothing should be done in the name of the Congress. He would not even mention the word Congress to the peasants. Some enthusiastic followers, like Babu Rajendra Prasad, besought him to carry on simultaneously the Home Rule Propaganda which was then raging over the country. But their efforts were in vain. Nay more, the Press and the Public became vitally interested in the movement on account of Mr. Gandhi's great act of civil disobedience and they wanted to send their representatives to report on his activities at every turn. But

he decided that his enquiry "did not need support from Press reporters or leading articles in the Press." For in his opinion the situation in Champaran was so delicate and difficult that over-energetic criticism or highly coloured reports might easily damage the cause which he was seeking to espouse. He would not even invite so moderate a leader as Pandit Malaviya to Champaran, for he wanted to prevent the struggle from assuming a political aspect. He thought that "even when the end might be political the cauee was a non-political one and so it might be damaged by giving it a political aspect."

Very soon he got what he wanted. As soon as the Government and the planters were convinced that Mr. Gandhi did not demand any change in the system then prevailing in the Province they immediately changed their tactics towards him and warmly offered to help and co-operate with him in connection with his enquiries Moreover, they had themselves realised that the old indigo system could not be revived without disastrous consequences. The Government, therefore, made a virtue of necessity and nominated Mr. Gandhi on a Committee to enquire into the peasants' grievances—that is merely those associated with indigo cultivation.

Within a few months the Committee concluded its labours and unanimously recommended that the planters should refund a portion of the exactions which had been unlawfully made by them. They also decided that the "Tinkathia system should be abolished by law." An Agrarian Bill was soon rushed through the legislature and passed in accordance with the Committee's recommendations.

But as Mr. Gandhi had indicated before, he was more anxious to render social and humanitarian service to the peasants than to work any political upheaval of a revolutionary character. He sums up the results of his few months' experience in the districts in the following words. "I was convinced that work of a permanent nature was impossible without proper village education. The ryot's ignorance was pathetic. They either allowed their children to roam about or made them toil on the indigo plantations from morning to night for a couple of coppers a day. In those days

a male labourer's wage did not exceed ten pice, a female's did not exceed six pice, and a child's three pice." One would have thought that under these conditions he would have asked the Government, or landlords or planters, to undertake the responsibility of establishing a sufficient number of schools in the district. But he did not do anything of the sort. Instead he only contented himself by establishing six schools in 6 out of the 2,841 villages of the district! He secured most of the teachers from our Province of Gujrat. Some of them were uneducated ladies who were hardly fitted to teach their own vernacular much less Hindi in Behar. But he himself explained to these ladies and other teachers that "they were expected to teach the children not so much grammar and the three R's as cleanliness and good manners".

These schools and the medical services attached to them were carried on some months after Mr. Gandhi left the district towards the end of 1917, and then they were closed or neglected. Mr. Gandhi was perhaps satisfied that he had done all he could to save the tenants from the oppression of the planters. But he had no reason to be for the tenants of Champaran and other parts of Behar continued to groan under the self-same oppression and tyranny of the landlords and planters after 1917 just as they did before.

Babu Rajindra Prasad practically admits the truth of this statement at the conclusion of the book which he has written on Mr. Gandhi in Champaran. Gandhi himself had the opportunity of seeing the kind of heaven he had created for the tenants when he paid a flying visit to the district in the course of one of his long tours in 1921. He found the peasants as miserably starved and oppressed as before.

The upshot of this was that Gandhi made a great mark in the political life of India and placed himself at the head of the revolutionary enthusiasm of peasants, and succeeded in diverting it into perfectly harmless and constitutional channels. Gandhi really made Champaran safe and quiet and comfortable for Government and planters for many a year to come.

VIII

GUJARAT CONFERENCES.

ALL THIS I did not understand when I returned to India in a state of convalescence. I was very soon infected by the enthusiasm of my friend, Mr. Banker, with whom I was staying in his Chaupati bungalow. He was in ecstasies over the great miracle that Mr. Gandhi was about to perform in Indian politics. He was already in correspondence with Mr. Gandhi who had promised to call him to Champaran whenever he felt it necessary to organise a campaign of civil disobedience in that district.

However, things moved quickly on our side too. Infuriated by Mrs Besant's vehement Home Rule propaganda Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, made a speech in which he said that Indians should not even dream of Home Rule. These words lashed the whole country into a state of fury and gave great impetus to the Home Rule agitation. Big mass meetings were held in Madras, Bombay, and other big cities and towns, to protest against this most reactionary pronouncement, and to call upon the Government to make a clear and definite announcement on this vital subject. The climax was reached when the Madras Government interned Mrs. Besant and her two colleagues—Mr. George Aruandale and Mr. B. P. Wadia—within the municipal limits of Ootacamund. The Home Rule agitation then rose to its highest pitch—eminent barristers, advocates and great merchants were all caught up in the public ferment. Public meetings became larger and more frequent, and popular enthusiasm began to bubble forth from a thousand and one platforms. spread far and wide, even to the smallest villages and towns of the country.

My friends in Bombay immediately set out to achieve two objects. First, they wanted to organise the Home Rule Movement on a very intensive scale with a view eventually to compel the British Government to release Mrs. Besant. And secondly, they wanted if possible to get Mr. Gandhi to plan and lead some kind of

passive resistance movement on a nation-wide scale; to secure Mrs. Besant's release and thus to inaugurate a new era in the political life of the country.

They attained their first object easily. But the second object was difficult of achievement. Luckily for them Mr. Gandhi paid a flying visit to Bombay about this time and my friends immediately approached him for advice and guidance. I remember a short conversation which Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas had with Mr. Gandhi on this subject. The Home Rule leaders were up in arms against the Governor of Madras for forcibly removing some Home Rule flags from some houses. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the great lawyer of Madras and then a staunch follower of Mrs. Besant, advised the aggrieved Home Rulers to file a test case in the Courts against the Madras Governor. The matter was put before Gandhi, who gave them the following reply:—

"Why do you want to consult a big lawyer like Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and indulge in costly and tedious litigation against the Government in its own Courts? The matter could be settled in an incredibly simple manner. All you have to do is to make thousands of small Home Rule flags and hoist them in thousands of houses in Madras. Surely Government will not send its police officers to remove all these flags, and thus you will win a decided moral victory against the Government".

This ingenious suggestion deeply impressed my friends. But Mr. Gandhi proved even more resourceful on the subject of securing the release of Mrs. Besant. Asked to give his opinion on the question of civil disobedience, he replied:—

"All that Mrs. Besant has really got to do is to cross the municipal limit of Ootacamund, after giving due and proper notice to Government beforehand and to offer herself eventually for actual imprisonment if Government remains obdurate".

He also threw out another suggestion to enable outside friends in Bombay and elsewhere to secure their desired object. He actually drew up the form of the Satyagraha pledge which would be signed solemnly and sincerely by all those who were really determined to take direct action in the matter. This was really to serve

as a test of the growth of any feeling on the subject. If, however, a sufficient number of signatures could be secured, the army of civil resisters were to march on foot all the way from Bombay to Ootacamund—a distance of about 1,000 miles,—and then to offer civil disobedience to the Government under the leadership of Mrs. Besant. This suggestion was enthusiastically hailed by my friends who immediately set out to secure the required number of signatures on the pledge which Mr. Gandhi had drafted out for them. Mr. Gandhi asked them to keep him informed of the developments of this movement while he was in Champaran and he promised to place himself at the head of the movement after a sufficient following was secured and if Mrs. Besant approved of the plan.

All my friends signed the pledge immediately and started collecting more signatures. More and more signatures were secured every day. I also felt—though still lying convalescent in bed—that the moment had arrived for real action. I had indeed been deeply affected by the rising tide of the Home Rule agitation that was sweeping all over the country around me. Now came an opportunity of realising my great dream of joining a campaign of civil disobedience in accordance with Mr. Gandhi's plan. I was really on the horns of a dilemma. I had vowed my life-long loyalty to my Society which would not, however, allow me to join either the Home Rule League or Mr. Gandhi's campaign of law breaking. For sometime my mind and heart were torn between the two sides. Eventually, however, I broke loose from the Society and joined the Home Rule League and also signed the Satyagraha pledge for Mrs. Besant's release. Though my friends remained in correspondence with Mr. Gandhi on the subject of civil disobedience nothing eventually came of it, as Mrs. Besant herself would not countenance it.

Yet we somehow assimilated the doctrine of direct action with our Home Rule campaign which was then fast penetrating into the smallest villages of Gujrat. And we openly began to announce at our meetings, which were attended by thousands of village folk and of course by the police detective—that we were determined to disobey any Government orders prohibiting our meetings and demonstrations. So while we were continuing the Home Rule

propaganda which Mr. Gandhi did not particularly like, we were at the same time propagating the gospel of civil disobedience which was so hateful to Mrs. Besant. In fact we were trying to make cur own synthesis between the political demand of Mrs. Besant and the political method which was so dear to the heart of Mr. Gandhi. We thought that as we were shouting from hundreds of platforms even in the smallest villages, we were making history and preparing the ground for a new political era.

Meanwhile two Conferences were arranged to take place at the end of 1917—first, the second Gujarat Educational Conference at Broach and the first Gujarat Political Conference at Godhra. As I myself was the chief organiser of both I had no difficulty in inducing the respective committees of the two Conferences to elect Mr. Gandhi as the President of both.

About this time my friend, Mr. Banker, made one final attempt to induce Gandhi to join the Home Rule League when he returned for a short while from Champaran. I remember the very small unfurnished room on the first floor of his old Ashram where Mr. Banker and I were closeted with Gandhi for about two hours discussing the Home Rule Movement. And Mr. Banker exhausted all the resources of his artful conversation on Mr. Gandhi, with a view to convince him how he was the one man who could place himself at the head of the Movement and guide it in his own militant manner. But Mr. Gandhi was adamant. Of course, he thought the continuance of the War rendered it thoroughly inopportune for him to plunge into any political movement of this character. But that was not all. He said he would have to discuss the matter fully with Mrs. Besant before he could step into the movement and reminded us of the well-known Indian saying that 'one scabbard cannot hold two swords.' In other words the Home Rule League could not be directed at once by him and by Mrs. Besant. He was very conciliatory and friendly—he even agreed to preside at meetings in Bombay and other places to protest against the continued incarceration of Mrs. Besant. He also agreed—as he did not before—that the Home Rule Movement had gone a long way to awaken and educate the masses on political matters. Eventually he paid a handsome compliment to the propagandist

activities of the League, in the course of a speech which he made at a big mass demonstration in Bombay. But that was the limit — he would not go an inch further.

In due course Mr. Gandhi came to Broach to preside over the Educational Conference. He lived in his usual simple fashion with his own select party. He emphasised the problems of mass education and women's education in his presidential address and laid the greatest stress on the adoption of the vernacular as the medium of education. His speech was simple and lucid, but it was perfectly tame and uninspiring. The usual Resolutions which had been passed at the previous session were adopted again and the usual speeches were made. A political demonstration was staged just after the Conference but Mr. Gandhi took hardly any part in it.

But even so he had already strengthened in the minds of us; youngsters, the feeling that he was a smouldering volcano which was now on the verge of bursting into vivid flames. A sentence which he uttered in his concluding speech at the Conference once again deepened that feeling in our minds. In response to the usual vote of thanks to the Chair, Mr. Gandhi said that he was "burning with a desire to give up his very life in the service of the Motherland and he would only really prove himself worthy of the praises showered upon him when he could make the supreme sacrifice".

From Broach we hurried on to Godhra to hold the Political Conference. This was indeed a much bigger affair. The atmosphere was charged with political enthusiasm. By some accident the Conference began 45 minutes after the appointed time and Mr. Gandhi, who was punctual to the minute, gave us a mild surprise by saying, "We must learn to keep to time. We must learn the virtue of punctuality from Western people. We have met here to secure self-government, but believe me, that this self-government will come 45 minutes too late—just because we are beginning our proceedings 45 minutes late".

He touched upon the political problems of India almost for the first time, in his presidential speech at this Conference. But his task had been simplified by the constitution which had beed adopted

in December 1916 at Lucknow. He had, therefore, no difficulty in pressing forward the united demand of the Indian people on the attention of the British Government. He also paid some compliments to Mrs. Besant—although I must confess, that in my opinion, they left much to be desired. For the rest he touched upon some local political grievances and on some social and economic problems. His speech on the whole, though not disappointing, was certainly not calculated to inspire us with any political zeal and enthusiasm.

I must, however, confess that Mr. Gandhi proved an admirable President and deftly conducted the proceedings of the Conference both in the Subjects Committee and the open sessions. I remember, I discussed all the draft Resolutions until nearly two o'clock in the morning though the Conference was timed to commence early next day. Even so Mr. Gandhi was always patient and considerate and tried to understand the different local grievances covered by these Resolutions and he dropped gentle hints for carrying out any amendments and improvements in them.

On the second day of the Conference he sprang a much greater surprise on us. The Subjects Committee had passed vigorous Resolutions urging Government to remove the much hated customs cordon from Viramgam. But at the very commencement of the proceedings Mr. Gandhi announced amidst thunderous applause that he had on that very day received a communication from Government intimating that the cordon had been ordered to be removed. He explained that he had been in correspondence with the Government of India for some time past on the subject, and that he had intimated to them that he would be compelled to begin public agitation on the subject at this political Conference if he did not receive a satisfactory reply by then. We had all somehow guessed that Mr. Gandhi would be bound, sooner or later, to lead an agitation on this obnoxious grievance if it was not redressed in time. Luckily Government woke up and spared Mr. Gandhi and the Conference the necessity of doing anything in the matter. Thus, in our opinion, Mr. Gandhi won his third victory against Government—the first two having been achieved on the indentured labour question and his Champaran struggle.

IX

MILL STRIKE IN AHMEDABAD

BY securing these three victories against the Government, and by presiding over the two Gujarat Conferences, Mr. Gandhi succeeded in placing himself at the head of the forces of political discontent in our Province.

In the meantime, he had also entrenched himself firmly in the public life of Ahmedabad, the capital and nerve centre of our Province, by assuming the leadership of the Gujarat Sabha—the moribund political organisation of the town, and nominally of the whole Province. At this suggestion the *Sabha* issued a petition addressed to Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India—who had then come down to India and was busy drafting his roport in association with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford—to grant the constitution outlined in the Congress—League-scheme adopted in Lucknow in 1916, and sent out emissaries to all parts of the Province to collect signatures on the petition.

Soon after a petition to Mr. Montagu was drafted there was Labour trouble in Ahmedabad, the second biggest centre of cotton industry in India.

The Ahmedabad mills employed a total labour power of about 70,000 persons. The conditions of the life and labour of their mill hands constitute even now a standing shame and disgrace to the favourite city of Mr. Gandhi, the apostle of Gujarat. The housing conditions of the labouring population shocked the sensibilities of the members of the thick-skinned Whitley Commission, whose scathing remarks on their sickening underground ill-ventilated disgusting hovels, were reproduced even by the London press a few months ago.

And yet after having earned enormous profits out of the cheap labour power during the War, the local mill-owners decided to make drastic cuts in the miserable wages of the weavers of their mills in the beginning of 1918. Shrimati Anasuyabehn had then

already interested herself in educational work for the children of labourers, and had begun to enquire into the scandalous malpractices of the mill-owners, who had been banded together under the leadership of her own brother, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai. On hearing about the impending cuts in the weavers' wages Anasuyabehn requested Mr. Gandhi to look into the matter.

"My relations with them (mill-owners) were friendly", writes Mr. Gandhi in his autobiography, "and that made fighting with them the more difficult. I held consultations with them, and requested them to refer the dispute to arbitration; but they refused to recognise the principle of arbitration. I had, therefore, to advise the labourers to go on strike". And then he goes on to enunciate the conditions which he imposed upon the helpless weavers before assuming the leadership of the strike. The conditions were as follows—

"(1) Never to resort to arms,

(2) Never to molest blacklegs,

(3) Never to depend upon alms,

(4) To remain firm no matter how long the strike continued,

(5) and to earn bread during the strike by honest labour".

"The leaders of the strike understood and accepted these conditions, and the labourers pledged themselves at a general meeting not to resume work until either their terms were accepted (that is to say, till their original scale of wages was restored) or the mill-owners agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration".

Even the meanest Trade Unions and Labour leaders would, I am sure, be surprised and shocked to read these extraordinary terms on which Mr. Gandhi embarked on the strike. As the workmen's mean savings would be consumed within the first few days of the strike, Mr. Gandhi in effect would want them to continue the strike on a starvation basis, or would compel them to do some menial labour for a few coppers just to enable them to keep their body and soul together. He would neither grant them dole nor allow them to picket at the gates of the mills in order to prevent blacklegs from getting in. And further, he shrewdly kept a loophole for retreat while providing for surrender, in case the mill-owners agreed to the appointment of a bourgeois arbitration, who might prove equally efficacious in securing the nefarious end.

The mill-owners replied to the strike by announcing a lock-out. The revolutionary discontent of the labourers was rising every day. They held a huge mass meeting every evening under a tree on the sands of the Sabarmati river to proclaim their determination to fight to the finish. And Mr. Gandhi addressed these daily meetings in his inimitable manner to encourage the labourers to continue the strike, and to behave in a thoroughly disciplined manner within the limits of the four conditions set out by him. The labourers daily paraded the streets of the city in peaceful processions in thousands carrying the banner bearing the inscription—"Ek Tek" (Keep the Pledge). And those of us who saw the rising tide of revolutionary enthusiasm had no doubt about the eventual victory of the workers.

While the workers continued to be firm in their fight, the dread enemies of hunger and poverty began to drive their claws deeper into their sinking stomachs. Frankly, they required some dole, however little, in order to carry on the strike. Pathetic appeals were made on all side to Mr. Gandhi and Anasuyabehn to provide some allowance, however small, to the starving labourers. But Mr. Gandhi was adamant. He resolutely kept to his principle of no dole. A cynic might have said that he was conspiring with the mill-owners in starving out and crushing the workers.

No wonder, then, that the labourers began to show signs of flagging after the first two weeks of the strike. "Just as physical weakness in man manifests in irrascibility their attitude towards blacklegs became more and more menacing as the strike seemed to weaken, and I began to fear an outbreak of rowdyism on their part. Their attendance at the daily meetings also began to dwindle by degrees, and despondency and despair were writ large upon the faces of those who did attend".

At the beginning of the third week the strike indeed began to show signs of collapsing.

But Mr. Gandhi had staked his whole reputation as a Labour leader on this strike. He must, therefore, lead it to victory, or confess his defeat. "I felt deeply troubled and set to thinking furiously about what my duty was in the circumstances". He then sprang a big surprise on the labourers and the people of Ahmedabad, and

really on the whole of India, "Unless the strikers rally", he declared at an evening meeting on the twenty-first day of the strike, "and continue to strike until a settlement is reached or until they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food".

So Mr. Gandhi embarked on his great public fast—the first of its kind that we witnessed in India. But there is another part of the story which Mr. Gandhi has not revealed in his autobiography. His decision to fast had been really forced by a dangerous rumour that rapidly spread in the labour quarters, and which flung deadly insult at his saintly personality. Some rank and filer grumbled under the stress of starvation : "It is all right for Mr. Gandhi to ask us to keep to our pledge and starve till a settlement is reached. Why should he worry over us ? He drives about in his motor-car, while we have to foot out many miles to reach the meeting place. And he comfortably feeds on his nuts and fruits in plenty, while not even a dry loaf of bread is left to us". This remark spread like wildfire in the city and stung Mr. Gandhi to the quick when it was conveyed to him. Not only therefore did he decide to fast till the strike was concluded, but he also pledged himself not to use the car during the progress of the strike.

While Mr. Gandhi continued to say that his fast was solely aimed at stiffening the back of the workers, it could not but have effect even on the hardened hearts of the mill-owners. The labourers were of course, thunder-struck on hearing of Mr. Gandhi's fast, and tears began to roll down the cheeks of thousands of them. But on the other hand, Behen Sayaladevi, the soft-hearted wife or Mr. Ambalal, the mill-owners' leader, was also deeply moved. Conferences began to be held now in right earnest between Mr. Gandhi and the millowners, telegrams poured from all parts of India requesting the millowners to settle the matter quickly and save Mr. Gandhi's life. Mrs. Besant sent such a wire all the way from Madras. And Mr. Gandhi's fast had not lasted full three days before the millowners agreed to appoint an arbitrator to decide the question of wage-cuts. But the man they appointed as arbitrator was an academic man, a professor in a college who knew little about mills and labour, and left less for the rights and woes of the poor.

This good professor eventually decided—as was to be expected on a wage-cut to help his capitalists friends—though of

course the cut was a little less than what they had decided to impose.

It may be added here that Mr. Gandhi had offered to the strikers some building and digging work for a few coppers a day under the burning sun of Ahmedabad in lieu of the necessary dole. Anasuyabehn herself shouldered the first bucket and triumphantly led the way. But while she retired from the field within the first few hours, the labourers had to work all the day; and when thoroughly exhausted by the day hard work's to which they were unaccustomed, they received only a few coppers from Mr. Gandhi's agent. They were thoroughly disappointed and the whole scheme ended in complete failure.

It was in this way that Mr. Gandhi led the first labour strike in India. The real purpose of the strike was not achieved. Drastic cuts were eventually made in the weavers, wages' and it was no consolation to the labourers to learn that these cuts had been recommended by an arbitrator who had been appointed with their leader's consent.

Had Mr. Gandhi wished he could easily have collected hundreds and even thousands of rupees from the city and the whole country in aid of the workers and could have carried on the strike to a glorious finish. The lubourer indeed showed fine mettle and militancy. They were really starved out under Mr. Gandhi's leadership, and the strike was "settled" by the surrender of the workers' cause.

The good workers of Ahmedabad, however, were so thoroughly hypnotised by Mr. Gandhi's three days' fast that they really exulted over what Mr. Gandhi called their "victory". And they agreed to organise themselves under a big Trade Union under the leadership of Anusuyabehn and Mr. Banker, the chief lieutenants of Mr. Gandhi in the strike. The Trade Union has since grown under the fostering and energetic care of these two leaders, and under the shadow of of Mr. Gandhi's personality. But this Trade Union has helped more to keep down the militant spirit of the workers than to inspire them to fight for their right. And though it can boast of setting up a few schools, dispensaries and a hospital for the benefit of the labouring classes, it has proved most reactionary from the standpoint of class warfare.

It has refused to associate in any way with the All-India Trade Union Congress, and with other international organisations. Indeed, Mr. Gandhi and his lieutenants have succeeded in turning Ahmedabad labour into their own special preserve over which they preside and dominate to further their own power and glory.

And now after all these years, foreign journalists and the Labour Commissions have thoroughly exposed the character of the whole structure erected by Mr. Gandhi on the so-called victory of 1918. They have given a most realistic picture of the miserable, stuffy, over-crowded and poisoned hovels of the labourers of Mr. Gandhi's home town.

X

"VICTORY ON BOTH SIDES"

NO SOONER had Mr. Gandhi settled the strike in Ahmedabad than he was drawn into the Kaira campaign. And it was for the first time that I had the opportunity of being associated with him in his campaign of civil disobedience. And I was particularly interested in this campaign, as Kaira is my own district, and Nadiad, where our headquarters were located, is my own home town.

Kaira except for some barren and sandy areas may be said to be a fertile agricultural district. It consists of more than 600 villages. Most of these villages suffered from excessive rains in the monsoon of 1917. Most of the monsoon crops had therefore been irreparably ruined. All hopes of the peasants were consequently centered on the winter crops which were restricted to only a few areas.

Under the circumstances the crops generally could be said to have been thoroughly damaged, and could be easily valued at less than 3 annas in a rupee. The peasants and the local leaders who had sprung up during the Home Rule Movement, had no difficulty in making out a case for complete suspension of the second instalment of Land Revenue, as the first had been already paid at the end of 1917. Messrs. Mohanlal Pandya and Shankarlal Parekh had already conducted enquiries in the district and had invited members of the Servants of India Society, and also Mr. Vitalbhai Patel and the late Sir Gokuldas Kahandas Parekh, who then represented the Province of Gujarat, in the Bombay Legislative Council, to hold enquiries in the matters. After conducting the necessary enquiries and assuring themselves of the justice of the peasants' claim, Mr. Patel and Sir Gokuldas Parekh waited in deputation on the Collector of the district and also prayed to the Commissioner and the Government of Bombay for necessary relief. But as all these efforts failed, the matter was eventually brought up by Messrs. Pandya and Parekh before Mr. Gandhi and his Gujarat Sabha.

I have a very vivid recollection of a small meeting that was held in the house of Vallabhbhai Patel—who had already taken a certain amount of interest in the last Conference at Godhra, and who had addressed a few political meetings in the district in support of the Gujarat Sabha petition—where the Kaira question was discussed between Mr. Gandhi and his small group on the one hand and Mr. Vitalbhai Patel and Sir Gokuldas Parekh on the other. Sir Gokuldas stoutly opposed even a remote suggestion of starting a No-Tax Campaign in what he considered the turbulent Kaira district. Mr. Vitalbhai Patel, though more eloquent on the justice of the peasants' claim, supported the conservative plea of Sir Gokuldas Parekh. After listening very carefully to them Mr. Gandhi said a few words, which deeply impressed us. "I regret," he said, "I am unable to agree with Messrs. Parekh and Patel. I gladly concede their advice is based on their own political experience of the peasants of Kaira and Gujarat extending over many years. Let me submit, however, that my own experience of mass movements and civil disobedience, extending over a period of nearly twenty-five years, point to an exactly opposite conclusion. If the facts are as Messrs. Pandya and Parekh have placed before us, I have no doubt that I must advise the peasants not to pay the second instalment of Land Revenue at all costs. The main thing, however, is that I must convince myself of the justice of the case, and I would, therefore, call upon my young friends to bring me reports from all the 600 villages of the district, and I would then represent the matter myself to the authorities before finally launching my No-Tax Campaign. With this in view we take the one o'clock train to-morrow for Nadiad".

While Mr. Vitalbhai Patel and Sir Gokuldas Parekh were grieved over this momentous decision we youngsters applauded it most heartily, and began to make the necessary arrangements for establishing our headquarters at the Hindu Anathashrama at Nadiad.

Some of us had already gone round a few villages in the course of the Home Rule agitation. But Mr. Gandhi for the first time put us to the test of covering every one of the 600 big and small villages of the district—some having a population of nearly 10,000 and others consisting only of a few homesteads. He ruled us with the iron rod of discipline. The enquiry had to be finished within

en days. The workers, therefore, were divided into ten or twelve groups, and each group had to cover four or five villages every day. And yet we were all forbidden the use of carts or any other vehicles for covering the deep sandy roads of the district under the scorching Indian sun.

We were thus put to a severe test. We had to walk 15 to 20 miles a day, feed on dry fruits and nuts when we could not secure any food in a village at short notice. We saw a few people wherever we went, collected more impressions than figures and eventually submitted our reports to Gandhi within the appointed time. Being thus thoroughly convinced of the facts of the case Mr. Gandhi requested the authorities to suspend the second instalment of Land Revenue. Letters and interviews having eventually failed to move the authorities he sounded the trumpet call of non-payment of taxes in the Kaira District and thus inaugurated a momentous movement perhaps for the first time under British Rule in India.

Mr. Gandhi drew up the following pledge to be signed by thousands of peasants in the district :—

"Knowing that the crops of the villages are less than 4 annas, we requested the Government to suspend the collection of Revenue assessment till the ensuing year, but the Government has not acceded to our prayer.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare that we shall not of our own accord pay to the Government the full or the remaining revenue for the year. We shall let the Government take whatever legal steps it may think fit and gladly suffer the consequences of our non-payment. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited than that by voluntary payment we should allow our case to be considered false or should compromise our self-respect.

"Should the Government, however, agree to suspend collection of the second instalment of the assessment throughout the District, such amongst us as are in a position to pay will pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue that may be due. The reason why those who are able to pay still withhold payment is that if they pay up the poorer may in a panic sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues, and thereby bring suffering upon themselves. In

these circumstances we feel that for the sake of the poor it is the duty, even of those who can afford, to withhold payment of their assessment".

It will thus be seen that Mr. Gandhi has kept a loophole in this pledge too, as he had in the strike pledge of the Ahmedabad mill hands. It is no wonder, therefore, that he showed an undue anxiety for a compromise with the authorities from the momet that he sounded the bugle of war. And he further left it ambiguous if he or the Government were to decide which peasants were in a position to pay in the event of a settlement.

But in spite of this preliminary weakness in the pledge, the No-Tax Campaign rolled forward rapidly. Peasants, big and small in all the Talukas in the district, began to rally under the Gandhi's flag.

"Dr. Besant's brilliant Home Rule agitation," (as Mr. Gandhi was pleased to concede after the event, though he scrupulously kept away from it during its career), "had certainly touched the peasants, but it was the Kaira campaign that compelled the educated public workers to establish contact with the actual life of the peasants". So Mr. Gandhi sowed the seed on the ready field and he reaped a good harvest.

Presently the Government began to coerce and threaten the peasants. Shoals of notices imposing fines were served on thousands of farmers. Attachments of movables and even cattle became the order of the day. Farmers very soon learnt to play a game of hide and seek with the Revenue Officers. Volunteers ran down post haste from the towns to warn villagers of the imminent invasions of Revenue Officers. A drum was beaten to give notice to all the farmers to lock up and leave their homes and to let their cattle free. The Revenue Officer could not then identify the cattle and could not attach any property, because they had not then any orders to break open the houses. Still they did succeed in attaching hundreds of cattle and other movable property of the brave farmers.

The tension continued to increase. This was the peasants' first experience of No-Tax Campaign. While they knew that

they must not resort to violence they could not naturally be expected to be too civil and courteous to the brutal officers. Occasionally, therefore, some mischievous imps of the village managed to frighten and drive away the cattle that had already been attached, and some officers were as naturally abused and insulted by the men and even the women folk who were deeply touched by the spirit of revolt.

Mr. Gandhi laments these natural incidents in the following terms—"And then it seemed well-nigh impossible to make them (farmers) realise the duty of combining civility with fairness. Once they had shed their fear of officers, how could they be stopped from returning their insult? And yet if they resorted to incivility it would spoil their *satyagaraha* like a drop of arsenic in milk".

The Government went ahead with its relentless policy and persecution. Cattle began to be sold in large numbers, the officers began to attach even standing crops and presently hundreds of farmers were served with notices to the effect that the lands would be finally forfeited by the Government if they failed to pay their revenue within the specified date. The first farmers who received these notices were frightened out of their wits. They ran down from the countryside to the Nadiad headquarters and surrounded Mr. Gandhi while he was walking in the compound. I happened to be there at that time and heard the brave words in which the Saint of Sabarmati advised them to pick up courage, and assured them that no Government on earth could deprive them of the lands that they and their forefathers had held for generations past.

The farmers thus convinced and reassured and returned home to continue the struggle. But the movement was already showing signs of collapsing. The weaker ones had already started paying their dues, the Revenue Officers were slowly piling up the coins in the treasuries. Fearing a shameful collapse Mr. Gandhi struck on an ingenius device to carry the fight forward. "With a view to steeling the hearts of those who were frightened", he writes, "I advised the people under the leadership of Mr. Pandya to remove

the crop of onion which had been in my opinion wrongly attached". So Mr. Pandya and his party were arrested and sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

But even this trick failed to save the farmers from the impending doom. "The campaign came to an unexpected end", continues Mr. Gandhi. "It was clear that the people were exhausted and I hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin. I was casting about for some graceful way to terminate the struggle, which would be acceptable to a *Satyagrahi*." The upshot was that he took advantage of a casual message sent by an Officer, that "if well-to-do Patidars paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension." But when he approached the Collector the latter coolly told him that "Orders declaring suspension in terms of the Mamlatddar's letter has been already issued." This sufficed to induce him to announce the end of the No-Tax Campaign and "a victory on both sides."

Mr. Gandhi himself admits that "the end was far from making me happy, inasmuch as it lacked the grace with which the termination of the *Satyagraha* campaign ought to be accomplished" and "the Collector carried on as though he had done nothing by way of a settlement."

There is no doubt, however, that the campaign coming as it did in the wake of the Home Rule agitation marked "the beginning of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat, the beginning of the true political agitation. Public life in Gujarat became instinct with a new energy and a new vigour. The peasant came to an unforgettable consiousness of his strength. The lesson was indelibly imprinted on the public mind that the salvation of the people depends upon themselves, upon their capacity for suffering and sacrifice."

Thus, though the movement promised much and achieved practically nothing, it at least served to awaken a new spirit among the peasants, not only of the District and the Province, but of the whole of India. The end of the stuggle, however, showed how Mr. Gandhi after leading a revolutionary struggle up to a certain stage could console himself and others with the achievement of

success when none had been really obtained, and he has repeated such performances again and again, performances in which he did not attain his goal, and yet he has chosen to consider them as victories for himself and the cause of India's freedom ! The latest and the most foolish of these performances was the famous or infamous Irwin-Gandhi Pact which concluded the Civil Disobedience Campaign last year.

XI

AT THE WAR CONFERENCE

WHILE Mr. Gandhi was conducting the No-Tax Campaign in Kaira the Great War had reached a critical stage. The British Government had not yet succeeded in inveigling the United States into the War. India had been so thoroughly exploited in men and money; to use the words of Lord Hardinge, the ex-Viceroy of India, she had been "bled white during the very first years of the War". Millions of India's treasures and hundreds of thousands of India's men had been already sacrificed in the great holocaust. But as these had not yet sufficed to win the War, the British Government strongly urged the Government of India to make the last and the most vigorous drive for securing still more funds aud men power from India.

The Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, on receiving these summons struck upon a now device to squeeze more men and money from India. Having already exploited the Princes, the landlords and official influence to the utmost, he now thought of summoning representatives of the bourgeois and even the political intelligentsia of the country, with a view to secure their co-operation in this task. He decided to convene a special War Conference at Delhi, and skipping over most of the leading Indian politicians, invited Mr. Gandhi with a host of Rajahs and landlords and merchants to attend the Conference.

Mr. Gandhi received this invitation even while he was busy exhorting the peasants of Kaira to fight the No-Tax Campaign to a finish. But the Government knew their men. They were convinced, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, that Mr. Gandhi was loyal to the core to the British Empire. And how he fully justified this confidence placed in him by the Government can be gathered from the following words from a letter addressed by Mr. Gandhi to the Viceroy immediately after the Conference:—

"If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress Resolutions and not whisper

'Home Rule' or 'Responsible Government' during the pendency of the War. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment . . . ."

(This letter was conveyed to the Viceroy personally by a "pure man" in the person of Rev. Ireland of the Cambridge Mission).

The following remarks of Mr. Gandhi about his exploits in Champaran and Kaira, also show his attitude towards the British Government:—

"In Champaran by resisting an age-long tyranny I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British justice. In Kaira, a population which was cursing the Government now feels that it and not the Government is the power and it is prepared to suffer for the truth it represents. It is, therefore, losing its bitterness and is saying to itself that the Government must be a Government for the people, for it tolerates ordinary and responsible disobedience where injustice is felt. **This Champaran and Kaira affairs are my direct and special contribution to the War . . .**

"In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of those (Muslim) States and for the Muslim sentiments as to their places of worship and your just and timely demand of India's claim to Home Rule lies safety of the Empire. I write thus because I love the English Nation and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty of Englishmen".

So while the British had conquered and continued to rule India by the sword Mr. Gandhi was trying to chain India to the Empire with the silken cords of love and affection.

Mr. Gandhi went to Delhi to attend the Conference. He, however, felt an eleventh hour compunction in attending the Conference, as the Government had not invited Lokamanya Tilak, Mrs. Besant and the Ali Brothers, whom he regarded as amongst the most powerful leaders of public opinion.

He was also worried over some secret treaties between England and Italy, to which Rev. Andrews drew his attention. He was, therefore, assailed by wholesome doubts about the morality of

participation in the War Conference. He, therefore, consoled himself by writing a letter to the Viceroy, then saw him privately and discussed all his difficulties with him and finally decided to attend the Conference, "if for no other reason than certainly out of my great regard for yourself (Viceroy)".

So eventually the strange thing did happen. Mr. Gandhi attended the War Conference, which had always been associated in the public mind with Maharajahs and bankers, and flatterers of the Government. Even so, he would have cut a decent figure if he had openly alluded to the great political hopes on which alone any further assistance could be based. He could also have respectfully drawn attention to the absence of all political and national leaders who were then far more distinguished than himself. But he did nothing of the kind. Instead, he practically distracted attention from the main issue by adopting the novel device of speaking in Hindustani (the Indian national language) in such a governmental gathering. And in English he said only one sentence, "With a full sense of my responsibility I beg to support the Resolution".

Having thus committed himself to a recruiting campaign though all India was seething with political discontent, he laid the flattering unction to his soul by addressing a long but perfectly harmless letter, full of passionate loyalty and interspersed with a few political demands, to which I have already referred. Having done this job in a style worthy of a true Imperialist, he went directly to Bombay.

All the Provincial Governments then began to summon Provincial War Conferences with a view to a more intensive exploitation of the resources of the smaller States and the local industrialists and the propertied classes. The Government of Bombay, acting evidently under instructions from the Government of India invited not only Mr. Gandhi but also Mr. Tilak and other local politicians. Mr. Tilak and his friends readily accepted the invitation. But they were certainly not expected to be so tame and quiet, as Mr. Gandhi had proved to be. They were sure to spring some surprise on the Conference.

So I ran down to Bombay in order to watch these novel political developments at close quarters.

Mr. Tilak came to Bombay from Poona and began a series of Conferences with the Home Rule League workers and other independent politicians who had been invited to this Conference

He and his friends proposed several alternative lines of policy to be jointly pursued by all nationalist members. Some of them were very radical. Others were considered more reasonable and practical. Eventually all the members could not agree on a joint policy, and so Mr. Tilak naturally decided to follow his own.

News of these Conferences and all the proposals discussed therein quickly spread all over the city. So there was terrible fluttering in many a dovecot, official and unofficial. People soon learnt that the Government of Bombay had refused to associate Mr. Tilak with the Preliminary Committee which had been set up to draft Resolutions for submission to the Conference. Nor was Mr. Tilak invited by the Government to propose or second any other Resolutions in the open Conference. So the Government had evidently designed to ridicule and insult a political leader of such eminence, by inviting him to the Conference and then treating him with such complete indifference, if not discourtesy. He would certainly have been treated with all the honours due to the leader of an opposition in any self-governing country under similar circumstances. So the political atmosphere in Bombay was surcharged with bitter acrimony on the eve of this momentous Conference.

Mr. Gandhi entered on the scene when matters were far advanced. So far as I remember Mr. Gandhi hardly conferred with Mr. Tilak regarding the Conference Even if he did see him he could hardly have discovered any points of agreement between his loyal pacificism and Tilak's militant attitude. But I do remember an important informal gathering that was held at Mr. Gandhi's residence, when he was informed of the attitude of complete indifference the Bombay Government proposed to adopt towards Mr. Tilak and his friends. Evidently Mr. Gandhi had not expected such impolitic conduct on the part of the Bombay officialdom. And he had already received a letter from the Government requesting him to support one of the minor Resolutions of the Conference. Most of the Bombay Home Rule workers were present on the occasion, and anxiously awaited Mr. Gandhi's

decision. For a moment Mr. Gandhi felt thoroughly non-plussed; he plunged into deep and inscrutable silence. We almost thought for a moment that he would be so thoroughly exasperated with the foul tactics of the Government that he would decide to boycott the Conference.

But presently he opened his lips. He spoke in a cool, collected voice. And he conveyed his solemn decision—not to boycott the Conference—but to convey to the Government his inability to support the Resolution that was placed against his name. That was all.

Next day, the much-talked-of Conference met in the Bombay Town Hall. Mr. Gandhi, as well as Mr. Tilak's party, attended the Conference. The Governor made his usual Imperialistic speech, and called upon all members to strain every nerve to pour out men and money in the service of the beneficent Empire. A special tribute was paid to the valour and heroism that the great race of Mahrattas have displayed in the course of their short but brilliant history. Then a loyalist member rose to propose the main Resolution, tendering full assistance on behalf of the princes and people of the Bombay Presidency in the prosecution of the Great War. Another lordship heartily supported the Resolution, which was thus duly submitted to the Conference amidst hollow acclamations.

True to his militant purpose, Mr. Tilak coolly stood up and requested the President for permission to move an amendment. The amendment was designed to make all assistance to the Government conditional upon the grant of a substantial measure of self-government to the people of the country. He wanted to say something to this effect. "We have no place in the Empire at present. We are only its slaves and helots. But if we get real equality and self-government within the Empire—as self-governing Colonies have—then the Empire would be really ours, we could be proud of it, and we should be ready to help it sincerely and whole-heartedly". But no sooner had he begun to speak and his purpose was revealed, then the President ruled out his amendment, and asked him to resume his seat.

But the President—that is, the Governor—did not perhaps fully realise the mettle of which the great Mahratta leader was made. He did not know that not even the enraged outcry of

Pherozeshah Mehta and Sir Surendranath Banerjea, and hundreds of their moderate followers, could silence or move Mr. Tilak by an inch from the platform at the Surat Congress in 1907, when he had decided to destroy it rather than allow it to continue as a loyalist organisation. So the inevitable happened. Mr. Tilak, after announcing his purpose and policy in the clearest terms,made a brilliant exit from the Conference with his party.

Mr. Tilak's walk-out left the Conference dull and uninteresting. But it continued its allotted programme of loyal Resolutions and still more loyal speeches.

And what did Mr. Gandhi do? Did he follow Mr. Tilak's lead? No. He felt too big and proud tofollow the lead of the most militant nationalist leader of the time. Did he leave the Conference? Not he. Nor did he support any Resolutions. He played a cautious and clever game. He just sat on the fence, but did not jump on either side. He did not support any Resolution. He did not open his lips at the Congress. He just remained present as a silent enigmatic sentinel who might be expected to take some big decision after the event. For the moment he sought to give, by his very presence, some dignity to this Conference in popular estimation.

XII

TILAK, MODERATES & MAHOMMEDANS.

THE READER will excuse me at this stage for breaking off the narrative for a moment in order to discuss the relation in which Mr. Gandhi stood to Mr. Tilak and his party, the Moderate Party and the growing Party of Khilafatists.

It was really at this Bombay War Conference that Mr. Gandhi perhaps for the first time brushed shoulders with Mr. Tilak. Of course, they had seen and discussed matters with each other before. But evidently, except for the broad basis of the Congress demand of the Lucknow Constitution, they had only agreed to differ with each other.

I have already shown that Mr. Gandhi had practically placed himself in opposition to Mr. Tilak's Party from the very beginning, by calling himself a humble follower of Mr. Gokhale, and by his deep intimacy with the Servants of India Society. Then again Mre Gandhi had scrupulously kept himself aloof from the Home Ruld Movement, which had been partly inspired and so successfully led by Mr. Tilak in the Bombay Presidency during those years. Ani it is to be further noted that in his heart of hearts Mr. Gandh deemed the Home Rule Movement not only useless but positively harmful to the best interests of the country. He sincerely wished—as he has frankly stated—that he could induce his countrymen to withdraw all Congress Resolutions and not to whisper Home Rule during the pendency of the War, and to offer themselves "as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment" in a most unconditional manner. Only he had not so far carried on any such campaign, as he saw the utter impossibility of securing the co-operation of the political intelligentsia of the country. So really he and Mr. Tilak stood apart, as it were, at the two end of the pole.

It will then be further noted that Mr. Gandhi differed fundamentally from other great Indian leaders on the practical method of grappling with the political problem in India. This may have been due to the fact that he had taken his first political

education and training in South Africa, where he was naturally put to the necessity of fighting for the redress of the particular and detailed grievances of the Indian Minority in that colony. He had indeed evolved a novel method of political action and achieved a certain measure of success. He had, therefore, been habituated by the political experience of twenty years of his public life in South Africa (and these were the years of experience that had carved a deep and indelible impression on his mind and soul) to study and grapple with the various symptoms of a disease rather than to work for the eradication of the disease itself. So inspite of any illusion of extremism that might be created by his novel (novel to India) tactic of *Satyagraha*, he really retained the Moderates' method of tackling separate grievances—local, provincial and national.

Mr. Tilak's experience and mentality were quite different from Mr. Gandhi's. He won his first laurels as an educationist, a scholar, a journalist and a politician, while at the same time he remained firmly rooted to the hardy soil of Deccan. And his brilliant, incisive intelligence, and his ripening political experience firmly convinced him, as early as the end of the last century, that Indians could best serve their common purpose by hammering on the central demand of freedom and self-Government, instead of frittering away their energies on the subsidiary issues of particular grievances. And even when he would speak or write on a burning topic, like the partition of Bengal, he would see that topic in co-relation to the disease of political dependence which might always be trusted to bring us new diseases as soon as the old ones were cured.

So Mr. Gandhi could not see the jungle for the trees—or when pressed hard, identify the one with the other. And that explains why he treated the redress of his famous eleven points as identical with the grant of self-government last year. But Mr. Tilak could always look through the foremost and thickest trees far and clear into the whole jungle. He marched firmly to the distant shrine and would not be satisfied with any sacred stones or pools that he saw on the way. Mr. Gandhi is essentially a reformer, while Mr. Tilak was a great national leader.

This difference in political vision gave rise to a fundamental difference in the mothods of the two leaders. His political campaign in South Africa obsessed Mr. Gandhi with a particularist

ideology. As we have seen before, he scrupulously kept away from any general-movement of self-government or Home Rule propaganda. But the jumped into politics the moment he could seize upon any special grievance—however local and restricted in its scope it might be. His political career, therefore, in India has really proved to be a series of campaigns for the redress of separate and special grievances, even though their scope and magnitude have expanded from year to year. And as in South Africa, so in India, he set about his work on every question with a careful and methodical enquiry into the subject and with a representation to the authorities, Provincial or central, for the redress of the wrong. This led inevitably to long correspondence, interspersed with personal negotiations, between Mr. Gandhi and the officers of the Government. And even when he could not secure immediate redress from the authorities, and was compelled to resort to direct action, he as invariably hoped and anxiously waited for the resumption of negotiations with the Government,—negotiations which would eventually lead to a truce or a settlement.

On the other hand, Mr. Tilak's method drove him to an entirely different path. As he set his heart on the fundamental issue of transfer of political power from Government to the people, he never found any necessity or opportunity of any personal or diplomatic negotiations with the authorities. And while the authorities were invariably anxious to meet Mr. Gandhi if possible and satisfy him on any narrow issue, they sincerely detested Mr. Tilak and not deign to meet him because he was the embodiment of his nation's protest against the foreign rule in India.

It is to be noted, however, that this very particularism of Mr. Gandhi attracted people to his fold in initial stages. Social and political workers, engaged in different organisational works, flocked to him for the redress of the particular wrongs which affected their people in particular areas. While Mr. Tilak dominated like a giant the whole scene with his single slogan of "Home Rule" and Self-government" as a panacea for all evils, humble workers sought comfort and solace in the advice of Gandhi, who had been trained by his past experience to act as a suitable mediator for the redress of special wrongs between the people and the Government. As Mr. Gandhi went on settling one question after another—and he settled

a good number of them in the very first years of his political activity in India—he commanded increasing faith and following among the people. It was, however, forgotten that Government shared the laurels with Mr. Gandhi, with every success that they enabled him to achieve. And as Mr. Gandhi himself has plainly stated in his letter to the Viceroy, mentioned above, he really helped the Government partially to reinstate itself in the affections and confidence of the people, by securing partial redress of comparatively small and temporary grievances.

I wonder how Mr. Tilak looked at such activity in his heart of hearts! In any event the modern miliant fighters would have no hesitation in defining all such activities—however militant they might appear at a certain stage—as distinctly counter-revolutionary in as much as they would end—as they must inevitably end in Mr. Gandhi's opinion—by securing only a few crumbs frcm the rich table of Government. Mr. Tilak, on the other hand, had all his life engaged in a series of propagandist activities which were consistently calculated to rouse the heart of nationalist India in an ever increasing measure against the existence of a foreign government—however beneficent it might be compelled to appear at times—and to work persistently for the establishment of their own national government absolutely independent of all British influence.

In spite of these fundamental differences of aims and methods, Mr. Gandhi never placed himself deliberately against Mr. Tilak. He even went to the length of showering high encomiums on the great Mahrattha leader on suitable occasions. He also succeeded in creating a soft corner for himself in the hearts of some of Mr. Tilak's followers. And yet he did not follow him. He was determined to carve out a separate niche for himself in the national pantheon. And strange as it might appear he secured his best and the most loyal workers from the very ranks of the Home Rule Leaguers, even though he scrupulously kept away from their platform.

Having thus enlisted the most intrepid Home Rule workers in our Province in particularist activities, Mr. Gandhi cast his eyes in another direction. Mr. Tilak's orthodox Hinduism had unfortunately prevented him from securing the confidence or affection of the

Mohammedans of India. But Mr. Gandhi's reformed Hinduism had enabled him to secure the hearty friendship and co-operation of all the leading Mahommedan merchants and workers in South Africa. So he had set his heart from the very beginning on creating genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Mahommedans. "My South African experience", writes Mr. Gandhi in his autobiography, "had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that my *Ahimsa* would be put to its severest test, and that the question presented the widest field for my experiments in *Ahimsa*." Even though he speaks here only of uniting the two communities, we need have no doubts that he was fully conscious of the necessity of lining up the two communities in a common political front against foreign oppression. And as future events will show he very soon succeeded in stealing a march on the orthodox Mr. Tilak by placing himself at the head of a real nationalist movement broad based on the full co-operation of the two large communities of the country.

But here again his particularist mode of approach to the solution of the communal question is worthy of note. In the initial stages he hardly made a big speech to signalise himself as a champion of communal unity. Instead he quietly began to cultivate contact with the Ali Brothers, even though they had been then interned in Betul and later in Chhindwara. Addressing the Session of the Muslim League at Calcutta, he exhorted the Muslims to secure the release of the Brothers, and to "be *Fakirs* for the service of the Motherland". He himself also opened correspondence with the Government for the release of the Ali Brothers. And he very soon gave an earnest of his whole-hearted friendship with the Mohammedans by most enthusiastically espousing their demands on the Khilafat question.

"It was not for me, he writes, "to enter into the absolute merits of the question, providing there was nothing immoral in their (Mohammedans) demands.........I found that the Muslim demand about the Khilafat was not only not against the ethical principle, but that the British Prime Minister had admitted the justice of the Muslim demands. I felt, therefore, bound to render all the help I could in securing the due fulfilment of the Prime Minister's pledge".

Such was the slender reasoning on which Mr. Gandhi felt compelled to pledge his support to the Khilafat demand, even before the Movement assumed the great importance that it did subsequently.

We vaguely knew that Mr. Gandhi was in private correspondence with the Viceroy about the release of the Ali Brothers, even when he was busy with the Kaira campaign. But once in the course of a casual conversation that I had with him about this demand he unfolded a brilliant—also dazzling—vision of the good things that might be wrought by securing the release of these brothers. "I am deeply grieved", he said, "over the terrible outrages that are reported to have been committed during the Hindu-Muslim riots in Saharanpur (in Behar Province). But what can I do alone in such a serious matter? Without the Ali Brothers I can do nothing to settle the matter. But the moment the Ali Brothers are free I would go with them to Behar and link the hearts of our Hindu and Mahommedan brothers with the very blood that has been shed there so freely. But I would not even stop there. I am confident I would be able to secure these Brothers' help even in saving the cow. For if they have real regard for the Hindus they can surely persuade their co-religionists to abstain from cow-slaughter, if only out of respect for our tenderest sentiments".

These words sounded visionary then. But the vision almost came true in 1921, and Mr. Gandhi came almost within an inch of realising the brilliant dream that he had sketched out with such vivid imagination years ago.

But while yearning for the conquest of such fresh fields, he did not cut himself off from his old moorings. I refer to his deep and ingrained loyalty to the Moderate Party and the Servants of India Society, which formed itself advance guard. As he has often admitted himself, by temperament and early training he has retained through all these years his moderate ideology. And curiously enough he maintained intimate correspondence and relations with the Moderate leaders even though he was now and again plunged into direct action. The Moderates, on the other hand, treated him on the whole as a shrewd and a tried statesman, who could be trusted to keep to the right line, even in spite of his occasional

lapses. And the very method of successive fights and negotiations that Mr. Gandhi has always pursued inclined him to feel a genuine regard for his Moderate allies who might assist him finally in tactfully settling matters with the authorities.

So the Servants of India Society had sent out trained representatives to inquire into the Kaira question. They practically agreed with Mr. Gandhi's demand and made their own representations to the Government of Bombay. And Mr. Sastri, the President of the Society, continued in friendly correspondence with Mr. Gandhi, even though he did not approve of Mr. Gandhi's No-Tax Campaign.

Thus Mr. Gandhi began to occupy a very prominent position in Indian politics. He continued on perfectly friendly relations with the opposing political parties, while he secured willing workers and co-operation from both. And he was planning to secure a third ally—the Mohammedans—whose active co-operation gave him very soon a towering position in the Indian Political arena.

XIII

MAHATMA AS RECRUITING SERGEANT

NOW to resume our narrative.

"The other part of my obligations," writes Mr. Gandhi, "consisted in raising recruits. Where could we make a beginning except in Kaira? And whom could I find to be the first recruits except my own co-workers?" So Mr. Gandhi began his first recruiting campaign in India, on returning to Nadiad from Bombay.

Let me explain here the mentality of the young workers who responded to his call for recruits. Curiously enough I was agreed with my Home Rule friends since the early beginning of 1917 on the issue of enlisting in as large a number as possible in the new India Defence Force that the Government had decided to form. Of course, we were not inspired by any loyalist feeling. Frankly we did not wish were to Government. But we really wanted to avail ourselves of the extraordinary opportunity that had presented to us of training ourselves in the use of arms and thus developing a new spirit of militant manliness among the Indian youth. Eventually many of my friends could not join the corps as theywere too deeply engrossed in the Home Rule Movement at the end of 1917. But I know that several young friends and companions enrolled and took military training in the Defence Force at Poona with the same object that we had set out for ourselves. I had also been to Mesopotamia, party with a view to acquaint myself with the military atmosphere that prevails in a real War zone, though eventually I had the satisfaction of seeing only the base camp at Basrah, and nothing farther.

I had, therefore, personally no difficulty in heartily responding to Mr. Gandhi's call as I had prepared myself for it quite independentry. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, raised me to the dignity of the first lieutenant of his recruiting workers, as Vallabhbhai Patel was by this time compelled to return to Ahmedabad for some private work. I also succeeded in infusing some recruiting enthusiasm in the

hearts of our local workers. And the recruiting movement soon began to show signs of some progress.

Mr. Gandhi also addressed a somewhat characteristic appeal to the people of the district to enlist in his company. "Among the many misdeeds of the British misrule in India", he wrote, "history will look upon their act, depriving a whole nation of arms, as their blackest. If we want the Arms Act to be replaced, if we want to learn the use of arms, here is a golden opportunity. If the middle classes render voluntary help to Government in the hour of its trial, distrust will disappear and the ban on possessing arms will be withdrawn".

Of course, the Government Commissioner did not relish such an appeal. Nor did some of us. While we wanted to learn the use of arms, we certainly did not want to possess them as a badge of our loyalty.

Awkward questions were naturally flung at Gandhi, when he, the apostle of non-violence, began to cruit volunteers for a bloody war. "You are a votary of *Ahimsa*, how can you ask us to take up arms?" Such was the constant query put to him. But Mr. Gandhi as usual was very clever at logic chopping arguments, and he silenced the village doubters by his own characteristic answers. He said, in effect, that while he himself was on principle pledged to the doctrine of non-violence—and he would therefore under no circumstances use arms even if he was pushed to the firing line—they remained non-violent only because they were cowards and weaklings. So they could not make the sacred principle of non-violence an excuse for running away from the field of duty. At another time he said that if we benefitted by the protection that was afforded to us by the British Empire from the attacks of the common enemy, it was up to us at such a critical moment to render all help to that Empire—even with the last drop of our blood.

Mr. Gandhi succeeded in enrolling a few volunteers in the course of a few weeks. But the response was feeble as compared to what he had himself secured in the No-Tax Campaign. "My optimism", he writes, "received a rude shock. Whereas during the Revenue Campaign the people readily offered their carts free

of charge, and two volunteers came forth, when one was needed, it was difficult now to get the carts even on hire, to say nothing of volunteers". Not only was the response meagre, but the dead set opposition of the village people proved almost overwhelming".

I remember one occasion when Mr. Gandhi was thoroughly disappointed. He went in company with Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and another volunteer to a small village called Navagam—which had indeed distinguished itself so admirably during the No-Tax Campaign. The hardy peasants of this village had stood up bravely against the threats of forfeiture of their lands. They had as one man assisted me most admirably when I had encamped there during the struggles. But now it was all different. Not a soul would stir out, even to pay his respects to the great Mahatma. Eventually, one hardy worker went to Mr. Gandhi to look to his comforts and to supply him with necessary provisions. And Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Patel had the mortifying consolation of sitting on the outskirts of the village for about three days, and living on food which they cooked themselves without evoking the slightest response to their appeal for recruitment.

Mr. Gandhi, however, continued his work undaunted by these difficulties. "Quite a number of names were registered...and he began to "confer with the Commissioner as to where the recruits were to be accommodated".

But all further progress was cut off by a sudden and dangerous illness which took Mr. Gandhi nearly to death's door. And then the monsoon of 1918 failed so completely, that our continuous tours in the villages impressed upon us the necessity of starting some measures for famine relief.

Before concluding this chapter I must refer to the Montagu Chelmsford Report on constitutional reforms that had been published during this recruiting campaign. All nationalist papers and leaders immediately joined in denouncing the Reform proposals contained in tbe Report as thoroughly insufficient and unsatisfactory. Mrs. Besant hastened to pronounce that the reforms were unworthy of England to grant, and of India to receive. Mr. Tilak's paper, the Kesari, came out with a flaring headline "The Day has Dawned, but where is the Sun?" The tide of opposition began to swell rapidly on all sides. But evidently the Moderate leaders had

in secret pledged themselves to support the reactionary proposal. So they grew extremely nervous at the vitriolic explosions of the Nationalist press. Among others, Mr. Sastri, the fiery agitator of 1916 and 1917, had now become "a responsible" statesman and was anxious that Mr. Gandhi, at any rate, holding as he did a central non-party position in Indian politics, should not commit himself in advance to any headlong opposition to these precious reforms. He, therefore, hastened to write to Mr. Gandhi to consider and weigh the reforms carefully before expressing himself on them; and volunteered at the same time to see him at Nadiad to discuss so important a matter with him personally. I came to know all about this letter of my late chief, and anxiously awaited his arrival.

Mr. Gandhi had by this time, of course, read about this Report from the newspapers. He used to read papers then every morning for about an hour or so generally—though later he stopped reading them for want of time. He was certainly not unfavourably impressed with the summary of the recommendations that he saw in the papers. We must remember that Mr. Gandhi know Mr. Montagu personally; and had already seen him in London before. And he hardly needed any warning from Mr. Sastri not to rush to the press on the subject.

Eventually Mr. Sastri arrived at the Nadiad one fine morning. This was probably the first time that he ran down to see him from such a long distance. And he came to our headquarters. Mr. Gandhi summarily informed him that he had to take the train at 10 o'clock to address a recruiting meeting at a village at noon. So Mr. Sastri, anxious to keep Mr.Gandhi company's, hurried through his morning meal and got into the train with us. And it was really in the train that Mr. Sastri began to pour his silver eloquence into Mr. Gandhi's ears to convince him that the Reform proposals were as good as any that we could have expected under the circumstances.

The discussions continued during the short interval of rest that Mr. Gandhi enjoyed at the village. It eventually turned out to be a miserably small meeting that awaited Mr. Gandhi. Undaunted by the thin attendance he addressed his usual appeal to enlist in the service of the Empire. Finally, Mr. Sastri 'was requested to say a few words. He naturally spoke in English, which could not

be understood by the majority of people present. But even so, he took this opportunity to praise Mr. Gandhi in the highest terms though I am sure he would have run miles away from any of the monster meetings that Mr. Gandhi had addressed in that very village during the No-Tax Campaign. And he concluded by saying "You shouid implicity follow the advice of Mr. Gandhi. He is the best guide that you could ever hope to have. And my words cannot appeal to you as his, even if I were born seven times over." I am sure both the great men were fairly pleased with the fulsome encomiums which they generously showered on each other at the meeting, and which prepared a nice basis for an extremely friendly exchange of views on the subject of reforms.

We took the train for Nadiad in the afternoon. I remember I myself was in ecstasies over the Report, which I have been devouring with great appetite. And it was probably in this train that I read out some nice passage from the Report. And Mr. Gandhi quickly replied "And this is the Report which our nationalist friends ask us to throw into the waste-paper basket"!

Except for some such interruptions, Mr. Sastri assiduouly plodded Mr. Gandhi with his gentle pleading for the Government Report. Mr. Gandhi went on listening, generally confining his replies to mild approval. He summoned a small meeting of chosen local workers to listen to Mr. Sastri's talk on the reforms in the evening. Mr. Sastri indeed elucidate the main principles of the reforms with his usual felicitous diction, and sued his eloquence to place them in a most favourable light before us. So we were all pleased with Mr. Sastri, and with the reforms. Even Mr. Gandhi appeared to be caught in the general wave of enthusiasm. So Mr. Sastri's purpose was achieved, and his commission fulfilled, he returned to Bombay with perfect confidence that Mr. Gandhi would by no means denounce the reforms, even though he would not court the wrath of his Extremist friends by openly applauding them.

Anyhow the publication of so important a Report, which practically constituted a complete negation of the Congress-League Scheme which Mr Gandhi himself had so loyally supported, did not interfere in the slightest degree with his recruiting campaign. And this again brings out in a remarkable manner the particularist mentality which continued to obsess Mr. Gandhi. While Mr. Tilak

continued to thunder from the hills of Poona, and all nationalist India was practically up in arms against what it considered a breach of the solemn pronouncement of August 1917. Mr. Gandhi continued to pursue his lonely furrow recruiting volunteers in the service of the Empire. In fact, he considered the constitutional question so unimportant that he has not given a single line to it in his autobiography. Nothing really brings out more clearly than this incident, how Mr. Gandhi would busy himself chopping off innumerable heads of the hydra-headed monster of foreign oppression that sucked the life-blood of India, while Mr. Tilak concentrated his attention and energy on the sovereign method of destroying the monster itself.

XIV

DRIVEN TO ACTION

MR. GANDHI has been experimenting with his food and body all his life. It all really began with a passionate desire to eschew milk as meat food. He was more deeply confirmed in this principle when he heard of the horrible atrocities which were perpetrated on cows and buffaloes in India to sequeeze the last drop of milk from them. On studying more of dietetics he began to live mainly on nuts and fruits. He continued to do so till he found out that the fruit fare proved more expensive in this country than in South Africa. So he began to take the usual Indian vegetable food, consisting of bread, rice, pulse and vegetables. But except for the baked bread, he took just boiled food without adding any spices or even salt to it. And then he occasionally resumed his beloved fruit diet when he found it convenient to do so. It was really such sudden changes and more especially his substitution of solid food for fruit diet that hit his system very hard. And a heavy meal of sweet wheaten porridge invited an attack of acute dysentery on a constitution which had been "nearly ruined dnring the recruiting campaign."

And yet he would take neither milk nor eggs—the only two articles of diet that could give him nourishment in a digestible form during the illness. Nor would he touch any medicine. And it was only after great persuasion that he began to take injection of medicated vegetable substances. Hence his condition grew from bad to worse. He suffered acute pain. He was soon transferred from the Nadiad headquarters to the palatial house of Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, and finally to his own Ashram. He became really so ill one day that he thought he was about to die. He, therefore, dictated his death-bed message to the nation. Friends hurried to his abode late in the night. The doctors assured him, however, that it was only a nervous breakdown due to extreme weakness and the morning broke without death coming.

While Mr. Gandhi was lying ill at Ahmedabad a special Session of the National Congress was to be convened at Bombay

under the Presidentship of Mr. Hassan Imam, to consider the momentous problem of constitutional reforms. Mr. Tilak and Mr. Besant came down to Bombay to lead a fierce fight against the acceptance of the retrograde proposals. Deshbandhu Das and Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal came down from Calcutta ta lead an enqually relentless war against the official reforms. The Moderate politicians, on the other hand, led by Mr. Sastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru started a campaign for the acceptance of the principles of the reforms. A battle royal was eventually fought out in the Subject Committee of the Congress. The Moderates were heavily defeated and eventually seceded from the Congress in a body. But the Congress adopted a masterly resolution, declaring the reforms as thoroughly insufficient ahd unsatisfactory, and calling upon the Government to change them fundamentally, so as to bring them in a line with the Congress-League scheme of 1916 before they could be acceptable to the people of India.

Of course, Mr. Gandhi did not attend the Congress, and hardly attached much importance to its decisions.

Shortly afterwards the Armistice was signed on the 11th November, 1918, and the great War was thus brought to an end.

By this time Mr. Gandhi became convalescent, and went to Bombay for medical treatment. When Dr. Dalal told him that he could not possibly rebuild his body unless he took milk, Mr. Gandhi stoutly refused to do so. But when the Doctor by clever interrogations got it from Mr. Gandhi that he had really objected to take cow's or buffalo's milk, Mr. Gandhi shrewdly suggested that he could have no objection to taking goat's milk. The Doctor immediately took up the suggestion, for any milk was good enough for his purpose. And Mr. Gandhi also succumbed. Of course, in thus taking the goat's milk, he adhered only to the letter of his vow and not to its spirit. But as he himself admits so naively in his auto-biography "The will to live proved stronger than the devotion to truth, and for once the votary of truth compromised his sacred ideal by his eagerness to take up the Satyagraha fight."

Since then Mr. Gandhi rapidly began to recover. And it was just when he was picking up some strength that he happened

to read in the papers the Rowlatt Committee's Report that had just been published. "Its recommendations startled me," he writes in his autobiography (they) "seemed to be altogether unwarranted by the evidence published in its Report, and were, I felt, such that no self-respecting people could submit to them."

In fact, this Committee had been appointed some months ago by the Government of India, to look into the whole history of Bengal and Punjab revolutionary and terroist conspiracies, and to submit proposals for the prevention and control of such crimes in future. The Committee, therefore, obediently drafted out a suitable law to arm the executive and police authorities with extraordinary powers of wholesale arrests, house searches, and secret trials. In fact, the Report sought to institute a most autocratic and arbitrary Police Government and Star Chamber methods that would surpass anything that was known in Czarist Russia or elsewhere. The Government was evidently flushed with the victory of the British arms in the war, and set out to crush under its iron heel any exhibitions of political discontent that was known to be rapidly spreading all over the land.

It is, hower noteworthly that Mr. Gandhi took up this matter only when it was pressed on his attention by the leading Home Rule workers. Mr. Shankarlal Banker and Umar Sobani approached him with the suggestion that he should take prompt action in the matter. On returning to Ahmedabad Mr. Gandhi spoke to Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel about it. He also continued the correspondence with the Bombay friends, who grew every day more restive and insistent. Eventually he agreed that if even a handful of men could be found to sign the pledge of resistance he would himself be ready to lead the Satyagrapha campaign against the atrocious Act. The Bombay friends lost no time ins taking up the suggestion and a conference of leading workers was immediately arranged to be held in Mr. Gandhi's Ashram.

It verily proved to be a momentous conference. Amongst those who attended, besides the Ahmedabad workers, were Mr. S. Banker and Mr. Sobani, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Mr. Horniman and Shrimati Anasuyaben. After full discussion the Satyagraha pledge was drafted by Mr Gandhi, and was signed by twenty-four persons in all—including, of course, many members of Mr. Gandhi's

colony. And quick to take time by the forelock, Mr. Gandhi sent his memorable telegram to Lord Chelmsford, intimating that in the event of the repressive bill being passed into law, he and his twenty-four colleagues did solemnly pledge themselves that day to start their campaign of civil disobedience.

This telegram was published all over India, and created a tremendous sensation. The ball indeed was set rolling.

The Viceroy sent a very courteous reply. He kindly enquired about Mr. Gandhi's health, and asked him to see him personally in the matter at Delhi. Mr. Gandhi accepted the summons, and set out on his tour to Delhi—which really marked the beginning of a series of all India tours and a nation-wide agitation such as he had never embarked upon before.

XV

AT THE WAR CONFERENCE

WITH his agitation against the Rowlatt Act Mr. Gandhi really started his very first All India Campaign against a national grievance. As we have already seen, Mr. Gandhi had up till then experimented with his novel method of Satyagraha either on the Indian merchants and labourers in South Africa, or on the farmers and workers of small areas like Champaran and Kaira and Ahmedabad in Iudia. The apparent success, however, which he achieved in these smaller stuggles now emboldened him to extend the field of his experiments and to inaugurate his first national Satyagraha Compaign against the British Government, and "the wonderful spectacle" of India's response to Mr. Gandhi's call to his passive rebellion marked not only a new stage in his own career, but alse a new landmark in India's struggle for freedom.

In order, however, to see things in the proper perspective, it is first necessary to understand the general temper of the Indian people, and the desperation to which they were driven by the announcement of the repressive Rowlatt Act. It is, therefore. neccessary to clearly appreciate how the political intelligentsia, including even some merchants and lawyers and students, looked at Mr. Gandhi's standard of civil disobedience. and were inspired to respond to it with such universal and whole-hearted enthusiasm.

I have already referred to the dynamic character of the Home Rule agitation that had already kindled new political enthusiasm all over the country. Wc have also seen how the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report served thoroughly to disillusion and exasperate even the comparatively moderate leaders of the Indian National Congress who even ran the risk of driving away the old moderate politicians in their desire to tell the British Government what they really thought of those paltry reforms. The end of the War, therefore saw India seething with political discontent and bitter exasperation. Nor could India's participation in such a world world war leave it as it was before. Some of the

merchants and industrialists had, of course, made enormous profits out of the great holocaust. But they evidently felt that new vistas of even bigger profits would be available to them in the international market, if only the financial policy of the Government of India was directed exclusively in their interests. The political workers, students and enthusiasts had been trained by day to day perusal of world events, to view them in terms of international politics than before, and they felt now more keenly than ever the shame and the disgrace of continuing to be ruled by a foreign power even while a lot of hypocritical lip-service was being paid to bumptious phrases like 'the freedom of small nations' and 'the right of self-determination.' The discontented youth had also been impressed and excited by the stories of the terrorist conspiracies that were described so graphically in the Rowlatt Report, and by the heroic tactics of bands of Indians in India, Germany and other countries, who made a desperate effort to subvert British Government during the war. Even the Indian sepoys and non-combatants—sappers and miners, tailors and hospitals workers, doctors and servants. Nay, even the hamals and scavengers, who returned to India from foreign countries after having gone through strange experiences, novel pleasures, and bitter hardships served to swell the total volume of growing discontent, and lastly the very section of Mohammedans, who had generally followed the traditions of loyalty with a view to secure special favours from the Government, now felt aggrieved by the deportation of their Khaliph from Constantinople, and had begun to agitate against the Government policy in distinctly threatening tones.

Thus the volume of popular discontent had already assumed a dangerous form. Whatever hopes had still lingered in the minds of the people about getting constitutional reforms, were finally dashed to pieces by the publication of the Rowlatt Act, and they were thoroughly convinced that the ungrateful Government had decided to reward their marvellous loyalty with only new chains and with fresh engines of police terrorism. The explosive mine had thus been laid. And it was really the Government and not Mr. Gandhi that put the match to the train by publishing the Rowlatt Act, and caused a series of explosions throughout the land.

It may be asked, however, how Mr. Gandhi stole a march at this stage over the more distinguished political leaders of India by placing himself at the head of this vast movement. We must remember in this connection that most of the politicians including Mr. Tilak and Mrs. Besant, were then busy arranging to come to England in deputation with a view to give evidence before the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament about the Reforms Act. Mr. Gandhi was, therefore, one of the most prominent leaders left in India. The political workers consequently flocked to his standard. Their faith in him for getting the hated Act repealed was strong because he was known for his capacity to deal with concrete grievances and for negotiating settlements with Governors and Viceroys. Moreover, the people were immensely excited, not only by the general prospect of being led on in a determined fight against the Government by so experienced a politician and diplomat as Mr. Gandhi undoubtedly was, but also by their burning curiosity to explore the seemingly unfathomable possibilities of his new weapon of passive rebellion.

Then again, Mr. Gandhi was not an ordinary politician. He was self-less. He had dedicated all his life to the country. He had renounced all personal property. He was already revered as a saint and a prophet by those who knew him. He lived the simple life of a peasant. His ascetism and fasts had enveloped him with a bright halo in a land that is so deeply religious at heart. Further,he addressed the people wherever he went outside Gujarat in Hindustani so that his message could be directly delivered to the peasants who eagerly listened to him. Remembering then the hoary traditions of miliant saints who had proved most successful in past history in negotiating disputes between kings and their subjects, or even between kings and kings, the people of India rushed most enthusiastically to rally to Mr. Gandhi's flag as soon as he blew the trumpet of battle.

Mr. Gandhi's attitude stood in striking contrast however to the temper of the people who responded to his call in such overwhelming numbers. While the people were boiling over with righteous indignation against the oppressive Government, and were inspired with a burning passion to destroy it, he took this opportunity (any other would have equally served his purpose) to

further prosecute his experiments in his novel method of non-violent resistance to authority, in order to preach eventually his great Gospel of universal truth and non-violence to a world which was torn asunder by violent economic, political and military conflicts. Thus the people had set their hearts on the achievement of real freedom for India and really wanted to agitate against the Black Act—as the Rowlatt Act was then called in order to destroy the foreign administration. But Mr. Gandhi was out to teach and inculcate his new doctrine of winning a political battle by suffering great sacrifices and untold hardships, 'even to the point of complete loss of property and death, without ever shedding a single drop of the enemy's blood.

We must keep in mind this fundamental contrast between the mentality of Mr. Gandhi and the people of India from now onwards, in order fully to understand his organisational activities, the difficulties that he met with, and the inexplicable halts which he often ordered in the midst of his compaigns.

The second thing to bear in mind is the acutely personal nature that he now as always gave to small district or provincial, or big nation-wide campaigns. Having been the proud and self-consious pioneer and leader of all political activities in South Africa, Mr. Gandhi continued in India to treat even big political questions from an intensively ego-centric point of view. We have seen how he not only failed to correlate his activities in Champaran with any local Congress Committee, but scrupulously asked his followers not even to mention the name of the Congress or carry on Home Rule propaganda during their campaaign. As regards Kaira, it was only by an accident that he pegged his No-Tax Campaign on to the Gujrat Sabha, of which he happened then to be the President. But he deliberately decided to keep the issue entirely out of the pale of even the discussion of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. Nor had he cared to bother the Congress with the issue of indentured labour on which he secured his first laurels in India. And so now, as before, Mr. Gandhi made his private and personal conference with a handful of political friends the starting point of a tremendous national agitation without referring at all to the Provincial or All-India Congress Committee. And he had the additional reason for

not referring to Congress his novel method of peaceful but direct action because he knew that this method was not likely to be tolerated, much less approved by the Congress organisation.

It is then in the light of these two considerations that we can easily trace the progress of Mr. Gandhi's plans : "If I was not laid up like this," he writes, "I should give battle against it (Rowlatt Act) all alone, and expect others to follow suit. But in my present helpless condition I feel myself to be altogether unequal to the task." So it was really the accident of his illness that put him to the necessity of convening even a small conference of friends to enable him to launch on his new Satyagrapha Campaign. And the Viceroy having replied politely, yet in the negative, Mr. Gandhi, set out to start a new organisation to serve him as a fitting instrument for spreading the new gospel of a non-voilent fight against Government.

"As all hope of any of the existing institutions adopting a novel weapon like Satyagraha seemed to be in vain, a separate body called the Satyagrah Sabha was established at my instance," he writes. We again see here, how he combined insistence on his personal initiative and leadership, and also on his novel method of Satyagraha, more than on the main object of political freedom that all India had so such at heart.

Nor did the fundamental difference berween him and his followers take long to come to the surface. "I soon found that there was not likely to be much chance of agreement between myself and the intelligentsia composing this Sabha. It seemed clear to me that this Sabha was not likely to live long. I saw that already my emphasis on truth and Ahimsa had begun to be disliked by some of its members. So here we see the very fundamental gulf that divided him from the people from the very beginning, and which has gone widening to an ever-increasing degree during the last twelve enentful years. Mr. Gandhi's motto, like Caesar Borgia's, seems to be "Either Caesar or None."

XVI

NATIONAL HARTAL

IT was easy for Mr. Gandhi to draft tbe Satyagraha pledge and to start the Satyagraha Sabha. He found it more difficult, however, to lay down a complete programme of work for our campaign of civil disobedience. The pledge committed us to break selected laws in a disciplined and non-violent manner. But the Rowlatt Act was not yet passed into law, and it was anyhow difficult to do anything in violation of that law, because it was aimed at distinctly violent and terrorist activities. As Mr. Gandhi himself has admitted "beyond the holding of public meetings I could not then think of any other programme. And I felt myself at a loss to discover how to offer civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Bill after it was finally passed into law." He was further assailed by doubts "if we could civilly disobey other laws, and if so where was the line to be drawn".

In spite of these initial doubts, he left with us clear instructions to prepare for a certain line of civil disobedience before he left Ahmedabad for Bombay and Delhi. He suddenly remembered that two of his most harmless books on Hind Swaraj and Savodaya—a translation of Ruskin's "Unto this Last"—which he had published in South Africa—could be reprinted and sold with a view to contravene the ban that the Government had placed on these books. But Mr. Gandhi had onlv expounded in these books his Utopian ideal of Ruskin's Socialism based on Tolstoy's teachings and of future India emancipated not only from the octopus of foreign rule, but also from modern Western civilisation with all its paraphernalia, of railways, and telegraph, factories, hospitals, etc. In fact these books could hardly be discribed as political, as they hardly indulged in any severe criticism of the British Empire or of the British administration in India. Still we secured some copies of these books from Mr. Gandhi's Ashram, and began to print copies of them in a desparete hurry, so as to be able to sell the copies as soon as Mr. Gandhi issued his marching orders.

Thus Mr. Gandhi turned our political enthusiasm to the task of printing and eventually publishing two of his most harmless end non-political books, with a view to "bend the Government to the Nation's will". Can self-love go further, especially in a man who professes to be self-less?

Having thus started the machinery of the new Satyagraha Sabhas at Ahmedabad, Bombay add elsewhere, Mr. Gandhi went to Delhi in response to the Viceroy's invitation. For once he "attended the proceedings of India's Legislative Chamber and heard Shastri's impassioned speech in which he uttered a solemn note of warning to the Government". He had also the pleasure of seeing the Viceroy "listening spell-bound, his eyes rivetted on Shastriji as the latter poured forth the hot stream of his eloquence". And, of course, he saw the Viceroy personally and "earnestly pleaded with him". He also "adressed him a private letter as also public letters in the course of which he clearly told him that the Government's action left him no other course except to resort to Satyagraha. But it was all in vain.

His pride being thus pricked, Mr. Gandhiji began to assume a more threatening and desperate attitude in his denounciation of Government's policy. From Delhi he went to Madras and conferred with Sjt. Kasturi Iyengar, the Editor of the "Hindu", Mr. Rajagopalachari and Sjt. Vijayaraghavachari, as to the best plan of starting civil disobedience against Government. For it must be remembered that the plan that he had suggested to us was confined only to the two books which were written in Gujarati which could not be understood outside Bombay and the Province of Gujarat. The rest of India was, therefore, without any programme of direct action. Mr. Vijayaraghavachari suggested "that I should draw up a comprehensive manual of the science of Satyagrah, embodying even minute details". Mr. Gandhi, however, felt the task to be beyond him, and he confessed as much to him.

For once, therefore, Mr. Gandhi was threatened with political bankruptcy—and that, too, just at a moment when he had already roused the dormant forces of Indian nationalism to wage a new war against British bureaucracy. It appeared as if the Commander-in-Chief could not chalk out the plan of campaign after he had already sounded the bugle of war. But Mr. Gandhi's

resourcefulness soon served to rescue him out of this difficulty "While these cogitations were still going on", he writes "news was received that the Rowlatt Bill had been published as an Act. That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual and was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness, when suddenly the idea broke upon me—it was as if in a dream." In the morning he unfolded the great plan to Rajagopalachari. "The idea came upon me last night in a dream," he said to his new friend— who was destined to be one of his most powerful champions in the years to come—"that we could call upon the country to observe a general hartal." "Satyagraha is a process of self-purification and ours is a sacred fight and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should commence with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day, and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer."

This suggestion was, of course, applauded most heartily by all the friends at Madras, and Mr. Gandhi immediately issued an appeal to the people of India to observe the hartal on the 30th March, 1919—the first Sunday after the Bill was gazetted as an Act. Eventually the date was changed to 6th April, so as to give sufficient time to the workers all over India to organise the hartal.

It must be admitted that this appeal coming as it did at that moment of intense political excitement, struck us with refreshing novelty and inspired us to a high pitch of enthusiasm. In reality, however, this weapon of hartal was not new. It has been used in India from time immemorial by the inhabitants of towns and States in order to express their resentment against the oppressive acts of their governments. Moreover, it should be realised that the hartal csn be observed only by merchants and shop-keepers. And Mr. Gandhi belongs to the Banias or Vaishyas who have always taken the lead in observing the passive hartal as a mark of silent protest against the State. So true to his Banya tradition, he cleverly re-adopted this age-long weapon to the new conditions and transplanted it from the narrow market places of small towns and villages to the vast theatre of the whole of India, to express the nation's protest against the imposition of the Black Act.

It is to be further noted that Mr. Gandhi shrewdly fixed a Sunday for this hartal. So all Government offices, up-to-date business houses—all Banks, Municipal and Local Board offices—would automatically be closed on this day. He, therefore, ran no risk of stopping or interfering with any official business. Then again, the mills and factories are generally closed on Sundays, and so the proletarian labourers would not have to strike against their masters in order to join the hartal. He therefore took the minimum risk and chose the path of least resistance.

The hartal, therefore, should in no way be confused with a real national strike. The workers on the railways, in electrical works and waterworks, were not asked to tricke work. In fact, no workers were really exhorted to strike against their masters. It was, therefore, strictly confined, as of old, to the merchants and shop-keepers, who have been accustomed for generations to observe such hartals on such occasions, and Mr. Gandhi did nothing to give it any new orientation or to give it a really modern and industrial aspect, with a view to paralyse the whole machinery of government.

Inspite of all these restrictions, however, the national strike, which might, under other circumstances, have proved a thoroughly tame and humdrum affair, served to give sudden and violent expression to the pent up revolutionary fury of the people of India. And the success of the demonstration was tremendously intensified by the hearty co-operation of the Mahommedans, whose Khilaphat cause Mr. Gandhi had so warmly espoused. Delhi was first in the field, and observed the hartal on 30th March, as its leaders were not informed in time of the postponement of the hartal to 6th April. "The word of Swami Shraddhanandji and the late Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb," writes Mr. Gandhi, "was law there ....Delhi had never witnessed a hartal like that before. The Hindus and Mussalmans seemed united like one man. Swami Shraddhanandji was invited to deliver a speech in the Jumma Masjid, which he did (a Hindu religious leader like this Swami could never have been invited before to such a specially sacred mosque), and this was more than the authorities could bear. The police checked the hartal procession as it was proceeding towards a railway station, and opened fire, causing a number of casualties, and the reign of repression commenced in Delhi."

Thus Mr. Gandhi gave India its first baptism in blood and fire on the 31st March, in this historic capital of India. It is quite certain that the inauguration of this reign of terror only served to intensify the zeal and exasperation of the people all over the country. No wonder then that the whole of India, from one end to the other, towns as well as villages, observed a complete *hartal* on that day, and presented "a most wonderful spectacle" of united national action—perhaps for the first time after the mutiny of 1857—to the dazed eyes of the civilised world.

The 6th April was observed as a day of national penance and mourning—of fast and prayer—millions of people following the custom of centuries went in the morning bare-foot to tanks or rivers, or to the seas, to purify themselves by bathing in the holy waters. And after finishing the bath the crowds formed themselves into monster processions—paraded through the streets with black flags and cloth posters, exhibiting slogans—and eventually gathered in big squares and the local leaders made fiery speeches everywhere urging the Hindu, Mahommedan and other communities to unite together under the leadership of the saint-patriot Mr. Gandhi in order to compel the British Government to wipe off the Black Act from the Statute Book. So in Ahmedabad we were ourselves surprised to see almost a hundred thousand people joining our processions and coming to our public meetings, which marked as it were a fitting climax to the feverish propaganda that we had been conducting for the last few weeks. And everywhere a Resolution drafted by Mr. Gandhi himself in emphatic but moderate terms was adopted with tumultuous acclamations, and was despatched by letter and wire to the Government of India.

Mr. Gandhi himself arrived in Bombay from Madras in time to take part in the unique demonstration on the 6th April. Following the unique example set by Delhi, he and Mrs. Naidu harangued the huge crowds in a Mahommedan mosque. Not only was the *hartal* a complete success in Bombay, as elsewhere, but all traffic in taxis and hackney carriages was practically suspended. The empty streets and the bazaars, the unprecedented gathering of vast crowds and the scenes of unparalleled fraternisation between Hindus and Mahommedans, practically served to warn Government of the new temper of the country, and held out a threat and a challenge which was so soon to be drowned in blood.

The demonstrations of the 6th of April, however, passed off quite peacefully throughout India, and the movement might well have stopped here For Mr. Gandhi had not yet set out any programme for united action. It was only in Bombay, Ahmedabad and a few other towns of Gujarat that thousands of copies of the Gujarati edition of his Hind *Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya* (which had been kept in readiness for the occasion) were quickly sold out to eager crowds—sometimes at fabulous prices with a view to disobey the Government order of censorhsip. But this action proved a damp squib. For the Government shrewdly took the view that the books—which as I have already shown before were perfectly harmless and non-political—"that had been proscribed by it had not in fact been sold, and that what we had sold was not held under the definition of proscribed literature". There was, therefore, "general disappointment" in our Province, where we had thought of earning cheap martyrdom and imprisonment by the very act of selling such "proscribed" literature.

It is, therefore, more than probable that the whole movement would have fizzled out in a few days if the Government had kept its head. And strangely enough instead of following up the tremendous success of the 6th April by putting forward a militant programme before the nation, Mr. Gandhi on the very next day sought, as it were, to counter the national current by lapsing into his formulas of self-purification and spiritual unity. He once again showed his sickly preference for his unique methodology instead of for realistic forward action. "The next morning" (7th April) he writes, "another meeting was held for the administration of pledges with regard to *Swadeshi* (use of Indian made cloth) and Hindu-Muslim unity . only a handful of persons came. The paucity of the attendance neither disappointed nor surprised me for I have noticed this characteristic difference in the popular attitude—partiality for exciting work, and dislike for quiet constructive effort. The difference has persisted to this day".

Of course it has. But it was not, and is not between love of real work and empty excitement, as he would have it, but between mediaeval and religious vows on the one hand, and dynamic realistic action on the other. And this again was born of a real ideological difference between the people who were yearning for political action with a view to paralyse the Government and Mr. Gandhi

who was bent on experimenting his much vaunted method of soul force on the unsophisticated people.

As, Mr. Gandhi's—and India's—luck would have it, the Government quickly came to their rescue. Mr. Gandhi set out from Bombay for Delhi on the night of the 7th. The Government anticipating a renewal of the trouble that had broken out on the 30th March, became nervous at Mr. Gandhi's approach, and decided not to allow him to enter the militant Northern Provinces. He was, therefore, served with a written order prohibiting him from entering the boundary of Punjab. Before his train reached Palwal, a railway station near Delhi, "I was asked by the police." he writes, "to get down from the train. I refused to do so, saying, "I want to go to Punjab in response to a pressing invitation, not to foment unrest but to allay it. I am, therefore, sorry that it is not possible for me to comply with this order". At Palwal railway station I was taken out of the train and put under police custody".

XVII

ARREST AND RIOTS

THE NEWS of Mr. Gandhi's arrest spread like wildfire throughout the country, and almost literally set the people aflame. Meanwhile, Mr. Gandhi was made to enter a third class carriage under police surveillance. He eventually travelled in a first-class compartment by the Frontier Railway to Bombay. Mr. Bowring, Inspector of Police, who accompanied him from an intermediate station, requested him to return to Bombay of his own free-will, and to agree not to cross the frontier of the Punjab. This he refused to do. He was, therefore, in charge of the police until his train reached Bombay: and was then set free.

But the people, on hearing of his arrest, went mad with fury and excitement. Following the recent example of 6th April, they not only observed *hartal* everywhere, but went through the streets compelling indifferent or antagonistic people to step down from taxis and carriages, to close shops and theatres, and to attack any Englishman they found on their way. Thus the trouble began at Ahmedabad with the burning of a Cinema poster, as the Parsee owner did not agree voluntarily to cancel the shows for the day. Going round the streets in company with Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, I very soon found that the crowds that were swelling every minute (on Reakey Road) were determined to break out into violence and incendiarism on their own, and would not listen to those who had assumed the leadership of Mr. Gandhi's peaceful movement so far. The police and the military were very soon on the scene, and one police officer becoming impatient at the threatening crowd closing round his party lashed some people near him with a long whip. The people began to throw stones at the few English soldiers posted on the opposite side of the road. One stone hit a sergeant, who nearly ordered the soldiers to fix their bayonets and fire. Luckily an Indian barrister friend persuaded the sergeant to desist, and I got on to a high platform and read to the people Mr. Gandhi's wish to keep peace and to disperse in a disciplined manner. The

trouble was averted there but only for the moment. I learnt by the evening that an Englishman had been forcibly pulled out from a carriage and he barely escaped the fury of the mob after he had received a few cuts and bruises, by taking shelter in an Indian factory (near Kalupur gate). Presently thousands swarmed round the factory, and the police on arrival fired a few shots to disperse the mob.

So, the trouble was temporarily suspended on the 9th April, the day on which we learnt about Mr. Gandhi's arrest. But it broke out with renewed fury on the next morning. In company with Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Kanuga, I went round all the troublesome areas, and hoped that the clouds would pass over. But the people had already begun to arm themselves with long bamboo sticks that they took by force from several shops, and began to parade the streets from early morning in large crowds in a threatening manner. We succeeded in snatching losts of these sticks which we piled in our car. But as we were returning home, after assuring ourselves of the reign of peace everywhere, we were painfully surprised to see clouds of smoke issuing from a huge temporary *pandal* that had been erected for examining University students.

This proved a signal for a veritable reign of murder and incendiarism in the city. The Collector's Office and the Telegraph Office, were quickly set on fire by enraged crowds, and the other crowds went through the city burning all the Police Stations they could lay hands on. An unfortunate English sergeant was caught up in the crowd in the main thoroughfare of the city and was done to death. The labourers struck and made the confusion worse confounded.

Next day Government proclaimed martial law in our city. Then we heard that there had been riots in Lahore, Amritsar, Bombay and other places, and that a troop train was derailed near Nadiad, as some crowds had shifted the rails on the previous night. Hearing of Mr. Gandhi's arrival and release in Bombay, we besought him and Anasuyabehn by wire to come home immediately.

Mr. Gandhi at the same time was trying to save the situation in Bombay. Luckily he arrived there just in time to pacify the

huge angry crowds that had gathered near Pydhonie. "On seeing me." he writes, "the people went mad with joy. A procession was immediately formed, and the sky was rent with shouts of *Vande Mataram* and *Allaho Akbar* ..... We sighted a body of mounted Police, brickbats were raining down from above. I besought the crowd to be calm, but it seemed as if we should not be able to escape the shower of brickbats. As the procession was about to proceed towards the Crawford Market it suddenly found itself confronted by a body of the Mounted Police, who had arrived there to prevent it from proceeding further in the direction of the Fort. The crowd was densely packed. It had almost broken through the Police cordon. There was hardly any chance of my voice being heard in that vast concourse. Just then the officer in charge of the Mounted Police gave the order to disperse the crowd, and at once the mounted party charged upon the crowd, brandishing their lances as they went. For a moment I felt that I would be hurt. But my apprehension was groundless, the lances just grazed the car as the lancers past by. The ranks of the people were soon broken and they were thrown into utter confusion, which was soon converted into rout. Some got trampl-ed under foot, others were badly mauled and crushed. In that seething mass of humanity there was hardly any room for the horses to pass, nor was there any exist by which the people could disperse. So the lancers blindly cut their way through the crowd. I hardly imagined they could see what they were doing. The whole thing presented a most dreadful spectacle. The horsemen and the people were mixed together in mad confusion".

Mr. Gandhi then drove straight to the office of the Police Commissioner, "to complain to him about the conduct of the Police." Mr. Griffiths, the Commissioner, had no difficulty in explaining the Government precautions, in view of the dreadful happenings in Ahmedabad and the Punjab. Mr. Gandhi was painfully surprised on hearing for the first time about the riots that had broken out in his own home town, and left almost immediately for Ahmedabad.

On arriving at Ahmedabad station the next morning, Mr. Gandhi again drove straight to the Commissioner's bungalow. Mr. Pratt, the petulant *Subah* of the Division, insolently rebuked him for the hell fires kindled by him everywhere, and gave him

exaggerated descriptions of the orgy of murder and fire enacted in the Province. It was only after this long discourse with the Commissioner that Gandhi, heard our explanation. We complained about the martial law. Mr. Gandhi, however, quickly retorted, "Haven't our people done horrible things too." And then repairing to his *Ashram* he announced a three days fast as a personal penance for all the riots that had broken out all over India, and exhorted his followers to observe a fast for twenty-four hours. The martial law was quickly withdrawn, and Gandhi on his side suspended his *Satyagraha* Campaign, and began in all earnestness to inculcate in the hearts of his followers the sacred doctrine of truth and non-violence from which they had so grievously lapsed.

XVIII

"HIMALAYAN MISCALCULATION"

While Mr. Gandhi was practising vicarious penance for the sins of the unruly mobs, terrible things had already happened and were happening in the Punjab. In Lahore, Amritsar and some other stations in the Punjab the news of Mr. Gandhi's arrest had indeed proved a veritable signal, as in Bombay and Ahmedbad, for popular uprisings on an unprecedented scale. A few Englishmen had been killed and some Government buildings had been burnt there also. But the reign of police and military terrorism—culminating in the horrible massacre of *Jalianwala Bagh*—that the Government presently set up in the name of law and order, was far more btutal and vindicative than anythiug seen in Bombay or Gujarat—in fact, than anything witnessed in India since the Mutiny of 1857. "In Amritsar innocent men and women were made to crawil like worms on their bellies." Hundreds of students were arrested in Lahore and made to walk sixteen miles under the scorching sun of an Indian summer. Hundreds were flogged to break their spirit of rebellion. Beatings, floggings and firings were the order of the day. But it was really the shooting by General Dyer in cold blood of about twelve hundred people within the enclosure of *Jalianwala Bagh*, till all the munition of his soldiers was exhausted, that "attracted the attention of the people of India and of the rest of the world."

Presently this reign of lawless terror was further intensified by wholesale arrests and deportations and by the police enquiries and inquisitions into the few murders and burnings that had long been eclipsed by Government brutality. "Leaders were put under arrest, martial law, which in other words meant no law, was proclaimed, special (martial law) tribunal were set up. These tribunals were not Courts of Justice, but only instruments for carrying out the arbitrarv will of an autocrat. Sentences were unwarranted by evidence, and in flagrant violation of Justice." And the sentences were mostly savage and vindictive—deportations and imprisonment for life or fifteen and ten years being freely allotted to the most moderate of political agitators.

Now let us see what Mr. Gandhi was doing while "the Government policy of lawless repression was in full career and was manifesting itself in the Punjab in all its nakedness.

After addressing a big meeting to inaugurate the reign of love and peace, Mr. Gandhi went to Nadiad. It was here that—practically within the period of a few weeks he was thoroughly convinced of his grievous mistake in launching the *Satyagraha* Movement. "When I reached Nadiad," he writes, "aud saw the actual state of things there, and heard reports about a large number of people from Kaira district having been arrested, it suddenly dawned upon me that I had committed a grave error in calling upon the people in the Kaira district and elsewhere to launch upon civil disobedience, prematurely as it now seemed to me .. It was here that I first used the expression 'Himalayan miscalculation', which obtained such a wide currency afterwards. Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the State laws... .. My error lay in my failure to observe this necessary limitation. I had called upon the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had thus qualified themselves for it, and this mistake of mine seemed to me to be of Himalayan magnitude". And as "it is no easy matter for thousands and hundreds of thousands of people to fulfil the ideal conditions mentioned above". Mr. Gandhi proceeded "to create a band of well-tried pure-hearted volunteers, who thoroughly understood the strict condition of *Satyagraha* and who would keep the masses within proper limits".

With this aim in view he next proceeded to Bombay, and began to enrol and educate a band of *Satyagraha* volunteers. But his plan once again broke on the rock of the fundamental difference between his moral philosophy and the political temper of his followers. The inevitable, therefore, happened. "The volunteers failed to enlist themselves in large numbers, nor did those who actually enlisted to take anything like a regular systematic training, and as the days passed by, the number of fresh recruits began gradually to dwindle instead of growing".

So he suddenly changed the role of a fiery revolutionary for that of a spiritual teacher. No wonder then that fiery youngsters who

had rallied to his banner of peaceful rebellion against foreign autocracy could not easily reconcile themselves to the cheerless and chilly atmosphere of the new moral school that he suddenly established on the ashes of his civil disobedience movement.

Meanwhile the reign of unscrupulous and ruthless terrorism in Punjab was going apace. The Punjab Government, directed by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor, was heedlesssly pursuing its mad career of martial law and savage sentences, "Mr. C. F. Andrews had now reached Punjab. His letters gave a heart-rending description of the state of things there, which left me with the impression that the martial law atrocities were in fact even worse than the Press reports showed. He pressed me most urgently to come and join him." so also did Pandit Malaviya and some other workers of the Punjab. But how could he go there in view of the official order prohibiting him from entering the Province? He repeatedly requested the Viceroy for permission to go there, but in vain. Should he then start civil disobedience again? This question placed him on the horns of a "serious dilemma". "As things stood, to break the order against my entry into the Punjab could, it seemed to me, hardly be classed as civil disobedience, for I did not see around me the kind of peaceful atomosphere that I wanted, and the unbridled repression in the Punjal served to aggravate and deepen the feelings of resentment. For me, therefore, to offer civil disobedience at such a time, even if it were possible, would be like fanning the flames". He, therefore, decided to swallow the bitter pill and not to proceed to the Punjab.

Thus the campaign of civil disobedience, though, only suspended at Ahmedabad, was practically terminated at Bombay. As far as I can remember, it was never given a decent burial, and we did not hear any funeral oration delivered by Mr. Gandhi over its untimely death.

Mr. Gandhi thus felt himself suddenly deprived of the chance of fighting to a finish this great battle with the Government. Nor could he go to the Punjab to enquire into the grievous atrocities of Government. Nor did fresh volunteers joint him to take a suitable training in the deeper principles of *Satyagraha*.

And yet he felt that he could never start his campaign again till he could train and discipline a fresh number of first-class *Satyagrahis*, who could at once rouse and control millions of people in all parts of India. Finding thus his hands tied on all sides, and yet brimming over with a burning desire to inculcate his gospel of *Satyagraha*, including its fundamental principles, and the wide variety of its applications, he felt now as never before the urgent necessity of publishing his own paper.

Abour this time, the Bombay Government summarily spirited away Mr. Horniman, the editor of the "Bombay Chronicle," to England. So my frinds, Mr. Sobani and Mr. Banker, being connected with the management of the paper, humbly offered Mr. Gandhi the full control of editing the paper. The Government, however, presently imposed rigorous censorship on the editorial columns of the 'Chronicle', and saved Mr. Gandhi the trouble of editing a daily paper. Undaunted by this sudden difficulty, however, the same friends offered him the editorship of "Young India" which had run a somewhat chequered career since 1915, when we had first started it. Mr. Gandhi quickly accepted the offer and began first to conduct it as a bi-weekly in Bombay, as the 'Chronicle' was then being published without the editorial columns.

"I was anxious", writes Mr. Gandhi, "to expound the inner meaning of *Satyagraha* to the public and also hoped that through this effort I should at least be able to do justice to the Punjab situation". This, of course, he did quite admirably. His criticism, however, of the Government acts was then couched in extremely moderate language, and his criticisms of the farcical trials and the savage sentence that were the usual rule in the Punjab were distinguished more by his legal acumen and able analysis of facts than by any political fanaticism.

Seeing the gradual success of this paper, Mr. Banker and I decided to offer him our monthly 'Navajivan' also to be run as a Gujarati weekly paper. He gladly accepted this offer, too, and I then began to work as a sub-editor of this paper under him. Within a few weeks of this transfer, Mr. Banker helped him to set up a new press, called the Navajivan press, in Ahmedabad,

to print this paper. And eventually "Young India" was also transferred from Bombay to Ahmedabad, and printed in the same Press. Armed with the press and these two papers—which I need hardly say have from humble beginings risen to a wide circulation—Mr. Gandhi now began every week to broadcast his novel doctrine of civil disobedience and his views on political problems to thousands and hundreds of thousands of people, not only in Gujarat and the rest of India, but to the whole world.

XIX

DEFEATISM IN EXCELSIS

Let us now pause for a moment to take stock of this *Satyagraha* Movement which had been stopped practically before it had been started. Let us also remember the whole policy of Mr. Gandhi, who practically ordered his soldiers to beat a hasty retreat almost before he had called them to arms.

Judging by Mr. Gandhi's words and acts in this connection, three points emerge for our consideration :—

1. Mr. Gandhi believed himself to be almost entirely responsible for the whole agitation regarding the Rowlatt Act, and for the grievous acts of mob violence that broke out in different parts of the country.

2. Convinced, therefore, that it was his call to civil disobedience that was really at the bottom of these grievous outrages, he hastened not only to suspend and eventually to terminate his *Satyagraha* campaign, but to shut down all political agitation.

3. And further, he sought to divert the energy of the masses—at any rate, the leading political workers and volunteers—from an active political campaign to a course of moral and spiritual training and discipline in the deeper principles of truth and non-violence.

Let us now see if Mr. Gandhi was justified in shouldering almost entire responsibility for these riots in Gujarat and the Punjab.

Let it be remembered in the first instance that Mr. Gandhi got his first experience of such a nation-wide agitation for the first time in his political career when he called upon the country to rally to his banner of civil disobedience against the obnoxious Rowlatt Act. For though he had secured the support of thousands of his countrymen in South Africa in his campaign of direct action against the legal and administrative oppression of the South African

Government, he had really led a comparatively small minority of people in a country no bigger than a single Province or a big State in India. His earlier experiences in India were also confined to comparatively small groups that had not been lashed to paroxysms of fury by any grievous political wrong. So it was really in the early beginning of 1919, in the course of his campaign against the Black Act, that he for the first time placed himself at the head of practically two hundred and eighty million people residing in British India in a serious, though non-violent, battle against the powerful forces of British Imperialism. While, therefore, the errors of his policy might be partially excused on the ground of comparative inexperience, his final judgments need not be accepted as infallible.

Reviewing then the whole course of this short but brilliant agitation, what do we find? It may be granted at once, without fear of contradiction, that Mt. Gandhi's very call to direct, though peaceful, mass action served no doubt to fan the fires of popular discontent to fury against the Government, and to instil into the hearts of India's millions a new spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance that they had not felt before. This principle of direct action, therefore, summoned millions of new recruits to the ranks of popular agitation, and served to swell the ranks and intensify the enthusiasm of the vast crowds that thronged the meetings and processions all over the country. Then the national strike of the 6th April not only marked the climax of a few weeks of intensive agitation, but served to blazon forth as it were, in letters of flame, the united will and strength of the nation, and served in its turn as the starting point of more fiery meetings and demonstrations all over the country. History will, I am sure, regard Mr. Gandhi's call for this all India *hartal* as the harbinger of a new era in India's political life.

But that was about all that Mr. Gandhi did, His original contribution really ceased after his call for the national strike. And the strike was really only a novel form of an All-India *Hartal*. The actual campaign of breaking laws was not even begun anywhere. For, as we have noticed, our sales of a few thousand copies of Mr. Gandhi's two non-political pamphlets was not construed as a breach of law by the Government, and did not meet with any

Government opposition or persecution. All that happend, therefore, after 6th of April, was caused by the tremendous momentum that had been received from the mere announcement of Gandhi's new gospel of direct action and the successful observance of the national strike. And while Mr. Gandhi was reduced to the position of a passive and almost helpless spectator of the events that followed with meteoric rapidity, the events themselves can only be explained by the vast volume of political discontent that had already been engendered throughout the country by the events of the war, general, political and Home Rule agitation, and the general spirit of unsettled restlessness that had swept not only over India but over the entire world in the years immediately following the War.

Let us now come to the immediate causes of the outbreak. The most important was, of course, Mr. Gandhi's arrest at Palwal. Mr. Gandhi really sought this arrest by defying the externment order of the Government. The whole trouble. therefore, may be technically said to have been caused by his single act of civil disobedience. But, as all familiar with the events of these memorable days will almost universally testify, the significance of Mr. Gandhi's defiance of the Government' order was caused by the sensational news of his arrest. The Government could have even arrested him without his offering any civil disobedience. The immediate cause, therefore, was the simple fact of his arrest, and not the particular method by which he sought it.

But while the disturbances in Bombay and Gujarat may be almost solely ascribed to Mr. Gandhi's arrest, a substantial contributory cause served as a match to ignite the powder magazine of popular discontent that had grown seriously in volume in the Punjab. The summary deportation of Mr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew served indeed in no small measure to inflame and excite the mobs of Lahore and Amritsar.

So it was really this triple arrests of Mr. Gandhi and these two patriots which caused the riots in the Punjab and Gujarat. Now looking at the history, not only of India but of other countries, it will be admitted that the arrest of distinguished political leaders have very often, if not always, brought such popular outbursts in its train. In fact they have been more common in other countries

than in India. But even so, India had its share of mob violence and political terrorism before Mr Gandhi came on the scene. Who does not know of the riots that broke out in Bombay when the savage sentence of six years was passed on Mr. Tilak, and of the riots at Dum-Dum that broke out when the passengers on the Komagata Maru were arrested?

In fact, a careful study of such sudden mob outbursts will serve to show that they are hardly caused, and much less planned by the leaders who are conducting ordinary forms of political agitation. Mob violence follows its own peculiar laws. And Mr. Gandhi must definitely be pronounced to be thoroughly obsessed by his ego-centric nature when he assumes, as it were, the sole responsibility for these comparatively mild riots and pronounces his "Himalayan miscalculation" as the root cause of the whole trouble.

Let us then come to the next point of the suspension not only of the *Satyagraha* campaign but of all political agitation against the Rowlatt Act. When Mr. Gandhi suspended his campaign based on principles on which he was naturally deemed an expert authority, his followers and the people in general were compelled, of course, to bow their heads. Still it might be conceded that there had not remained much opportunity for a peaceful breach of the laws as people had been cowed down and terror-stricken in the two Provinces which had taken the foremost part in the stuggle. The question therefore remains: Was Mr. Gandhi really justified in shutting down all political agitation, not only against the Rowlatt Act, but even against the monstrous barbarities that were then being perpetrated every day in the Punjab during the month of April 1919 and thereafter? A firmer and more realistic politician would, I have no doubt, have done something to instill hope and courage in the hearts of his terror-stricken followers by resuming almost immediately normal political agitation of a fairly aggressive character. Such action would have served to turn the tide against the Government But Mr. Gandhi definitely and deliberately chose a policy of unmitigated defeatism by continuing to harp on the faults of the people without moving even his little finger against the Government in a determined manner. And when he did begin to carry on any propaganda in his "Young Ihdia" again he could not see the jungle for the trees, and forgot to fight for the abrogation of the Rowlatt Act and for the even

more important demand of self-government or of political freedom, and aimed all his shafts against the undoubtedly horrible Government atrocities in the Punjab.

To turn to the third point, regarding the diversion of political energy into the pacific channels of moral and spiritual discipline, just as Mr. Gandhi failed in diagnosing the root cause of the riots, so also he committed a still greater blunder in advising suitable remedies for preventing such outbreaks in future. Just as he continued to believe that his fiery gospel was the root cause of all the troubles, so also he somehow continued to harbour the delusion that many, or at any rate, some of the "educated workers" had taken a hand in the riots. It must be remembered that except for a stormy scene in Bombay that he witnessed personally, Mr. Gandhi had been always hundreds of miles away from the actual scenes of disorder. But the outbreaks weakened and unnerved him so completely that he became liable to be swayed by the official versions of the riots even more than those given by his most trusted colleagues. And after the many conversations that I had with Mr. Gandhi himself on the subject, I was convinced that the pictures presented by Mr. Griffiths in Bombay and Mr. Pratt in Ahmedabad, sufficed to convince him that a good number of so-called *Satyagrahi* workers had more or less taken the lead in the riots in the Punjab and Gujarat. Some of us strove hard to eradicate that wrong impression. But he would not withdraw the very damaging statement that he had made after his arrival in Ahmedabad about the responsibility of the "educated workers". The last time that I fought it out with him was in Bombay many months after the riots; and he was then so far moved by my appeal that he wrote a private letter to some official who was enquiring into the Ahmedabad crimes. Still, hurried and unfair as he know his statement was, he has done nothing to modify or withdraw it in public to this day.

As I was myself in the centre of the storm that so suddenly broke over our benumbed heads at Ahmedabad, I can easily justify—and I believe all my colleagues, including Mr. Valabhbhai Patel would agree with me when I say—that the conscious leaders and workers who had been carrying on propaganda till the morning of the 10th April had not only no hand in the riots, but that all of them were thoroughly dumb-found on seeing the burning lava of

popular fury that began, as it were, to suddenly spout forth with demonical energy from some mysterious subterranean vaults, and that kindled hell-fires all over the city for three mad days. And the same story holds good for the other cities which witnessed similar mob out-bursts. Great fights in history whether they have ushered in a beneficent revolution or brought about untold chaos and disorder—have nearly always been thus worked out by the strange laws of mass psychology, and owe comparatively little to the small group of conscious thinkers and workers.

This being so, there was nothing really wrong with the comparatively small number of people who had signed Mr. Gandhi's pledge of Civil Disobedience. And then they had hardly any opportunity of breaking any laws themselves. But as they were gradually recovering from the bewilderment and stupor of the few days' riot, Mr. Gandhi called upon them to organise themselves into a band of peace and to instill the doctrines of love and non-violence into the hearts of the people. So we did go about holding meetings in small streets, where we read some message or other that Mr. Gandhi would issue every day from the precincts of his Ashram. But alas, we preached before people who again had hardly taken any part in the riots at all, and who were too terror-stricken by the memory of the martial law regime and the police raids that even then continued to haunt them, to be affected by our words. Guided by Mr. Gandhi's sanctimonious advise we plodded on for some weeks in Ahmedabad. But it was all a thoroughly tame, insipid and useless business. Centuries of oppression, the deprivation of arms, acute poverty, scanty and that, too, vegeterian food, and the Hindu religion of peace, have combined to render the masses of Indians so weak in heart and so timid in action that they hardly require to be given any additional doses of non-violence.

Now let it be remembered that the leading workers who were the first to rally to Mr. Gandhi's banner of civil disobedience, and who helped to make his new movement such a resounding success throughout the county, had most of them trained themselves into political work from the days of the Home Rule agitation under the inspiration of Mr. Besant and Mr. Tilak. Of course, their ranks, like their following, had been considerably reinforced since Mr. Gandhi announced his famous *Satyagraha* pledge. But even so, most of them had been from the very inception really inspired

by keen political motives, and they had joined Mr. Gandhi only because he offered them a new and untried weapon of direct action to fight the Government. But when Mr. Gandhi suddenly cried a halt in the movement on account of the three days' riots in a few cities in the north west of India, and further proceeded to charge them with a peculiar, moral and ideological mission, they were puzzled and dumb-founded. They really felt—though most of them did not dare to express their feelings to the Mahatma—that in accepting Mr. Gandhi's leadership they had the poiltical freedom of India by direct action as their objective, but now they were being led to a strange goal by novel route of which they had never dreamt before. And finally when all hopes of resuming the campaign were completely shattered, and Mr. Gandhi began practically to line up with the Moderates by mildly criticising in their most approved manner the Government policy in the Punjab, the workers naturally became faint-hearted and began to drop away from his ranks.

But that was not all. Taking advantage of the lull in the political situation Mr. Gandhi began further to re-inforce his plan for setting up a novel kind of Swaraj along the line laid down in his booklet on Hind-Swaraj by springing on us the new gospel of the Spinning Wheel, and by organising a Swadeshi Sabha for the purpose. But I must deal with his beginning in this matter in a new chapter.

XX

DISCOVERY OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

AS Mr. Gandhi's infatuation for the spinning wheel has developed in rapid strides since he started the Swadeshi Sabha in the summer of 1919 in Bombay, it is necessary to remember how it first developed at the beginning of this century.

The Swadeshi Movement has been undoubtedly associated with India's struggle for political freedom, since Lord Curzon announced his scheme of the Partition of Bengal in 1905. There is no doubt that resentment against Government policy first incited the people of Bengal and then of all India to revenge themselves on the British people by boycotting their cotton goods. So this outburst of the boycott movement must be really treated as quite akin to the boycott of British tea in Boston harbour, and the boycott of all British goods by the enraged Chinese. But if Lancashire cottons were to be boycotted, it naturally follows as a corollary that Indian made cloth must necessarily be specially patronised. Thus the movement of boycott was very soon supplemented by propaganda for the Swadeshi cloth and incidentally for encouraging all Indian made goods. The shrewd mill-owners of Ahmedabad and Bombay, however, availed themselves of this welcome opportunity by committing terrible frauds on the credulous patriotic public by palming off bad goods at fancy prices. Such a policy was naturally resented by the people as soon as it came to light, and it practically brought the old Swadeshi Movement to an untimely end.

Still it did leave many marks behind. Just as the agitation for partition of Bengal contributed the pregnant terms Swaraj and Swadeshi to the political vocabulary of India, so also it helped to build up a chain of Swadeshi stores—where Indian mill-made cloth and other Indian made goods were sold—in many of the principal cities and towns of India. When Mrs. Besant came on the scene, she also exhorted Indians to prefer Swadeshi to foreign goods. Thus while Swadeshi had remained a word to swear by the slogans of "boycott of British goods" and "British cloth" which had been

always favoured by the Bengal and Deccan School of politicians, were discarded by people in the other Provinces as impracticable.

It is, therefore, worth noting that it was really the manager of the principal Swadeshi store in Bombay (that had really been promoted by Mr. Tilak)—one Mr. Jerajani, who earnestly requested and finally succeeded in inducing Mr. Gandhi to administer the Swadeshi pledge to the people on the 7th April, 1919, It is also necessary to understand what this pledge was when it was first issued by Mr. Gandhi and all leading workers were asked to canvas signatures on it largely in Bombay and Gujarat. Mr. Gandhi had not then fully developed his ideas of Spinning Wheel. Even if he was privately experimenting in the matter, there was no Khadi—hand-spun and hand-woven cloth—available on the market at that time. Curious as it might, therefore, appear there were three alternative pledges that had been drafted by Mr. Gandhi, after long discussions and consultations with many principal workers. The first pledge bound the signatory to use cloth woven by hand out of the Indian mill-made yarn. The second was designed to limit the signatory to the use of cloth woven in Indian mills out of Indian mill-spun yarn. And the third, which was really devised for the convenience of more fashionable people required the signatory to use cloth manufactured in Indian mills out of foreign yarn. Mr. Gandhi, in fact, was always doubtful about the propriety of the third kind of pledge, as he could not but believe that all cloth made out of foreign yarn must necessarily be treated as foreign cloth. The work of canvassing signatures on these pledges went merrily apace, and it was primarily with a view to consolidate and stabilise the movement that was thus initiated on the 7th April that Mr. Gandhi deemed it necessary to organise his Swadeshi Sabha when he was in Bombay trying to give spiritual training in the doctrines of *Satyagraha* after the suspension of his campaign.

Once on the track of the Swadeshi movement, Mr. Gandhi did not take long to probe deeper into the matter. He now found the necessary time and leisure to concentrate his mind on the solution of what he deemed the most important economic qusetion for India. Hurled back from his *Satyagraha* campaign by the fury of the mobs and the might of the British arms he sough quick solace in preaching—now more vigorously than ever before—that British power in India would vanish as soon as we, as a nation

ceased to buy Lancashire goods. For he was convinced that the British acquired political dominion over India in order to create a suitable market for their Lancashire goods! Therefore we had only to cease buying these goods—which had destroyed our own flourishing, spinning and weaving industries—in order to deprive the British "shop-keepers" of all motive for ruling over us. And yet he did not straightaway call for a boycott of British goods. For if we excluded British textiles only, some other country—the Japanese or Americans—might push on their goods instead, and might make it an excuse for substituting their power for the British dominion. So Mr. Gandhi urged upon us to set our face against all foreign-cloth, and to use only Indian cloth made out of Indian yarn And he prophesied—as he does even to-day—that India will enjoy a real Swaraj as soon as its people manufacture and use all the cloth that they need.

Needless to say, this statement did not go unchallenged. The Rowlatt Act agitation had already drawn some mill-owners, like Mr. Omar Sobani, within the rank of his followers. And many more began to crowd round him with even more gushing affection. as he began to preach his Swadeshi gospel. While they, as a class, hoped to sell their goods better under the influence of the new propaganda, there was some, like Mr. Sobani, who sharply brought Mr. Gandhi to a sense of the realities of the situation. They told him plainly that his propaganda could only create a better market for Indian goods, and push up their prices, and thus fill the coffers of the Indian mill-owners. India consumed Rs. 600,000,000 worth of cloth from foreign countries in addition to the Indian made cloth, and the outcry for Swadeshi would in reality prove quite meaningless and wasteful if it was not accompanied by the production of a substantial amount of cloth which could replace the foreign imports.

Mr. Gandhi then began to search for avenues of increasing the cloth production in India. He at first naturally thought of setting up hand-looms on a large scale in order to weave yarn made in Indian spinning mills. It will be remembered that he had already set up weaving hand-looms in his own Ashram from 1915, and he had trained many of his colleagues as expert weavers. But again he found that there was no half-way halting house on the road to full Swadeshi as he envisaged it. Experiments in the

Ashram had convinced him that Indian Spinning Mills did not turn out a sufficient excess of yarn beyond their own needs which could be woven on hand-looms on an extensive scale. Many, if not most, of the hand-looms working in India use foreign yarn, which was inacceptable to him. He, therefore, felt compelled to resuscitate the use of the primitive spinning wheel throughout the length and breadth of the country, and thus finally solve the problem of producing a sufficient quantity of Indian yarn and cloth in the country, and also of curing the poverty of millions of unemployed and half employed people living in the villages of India.

Luckily for him, however, he found himself thoroughly prepared for this emergency by the experiments that he had been making in his own Ashram in the matter of cloth production. He has described in some detail the various stages by which he felt it necessary to turn to the spinning wheel. He naively confesses in his book "Hind Swaraj", which was pubiished in 1908 that he had not seen a hand-loom or a spinning wheel when he described these as "the panacea for the growing pauperism of India". And it may be confidently stated that he set up the first hand-loom in his Ashram in Ahmedabad primarily with a view to create a colony of men and women who would live on the food and use the cloth that they would make themselves, and who would thus serve as an object lesson of a self-sufficient order of society so dear to his heart. "The object that we set before ourselves," he writes, "was to be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands. We, therefore, forthwith discarded the use of mill-woven cloth and all the members of the Ashram resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only". He was, however, soon faced by the difficulty of securing sufficient mill yarn for the purpose. Moreover, he also began to feel that he and his colleagues were making themselves perfectly ridiculous in their efforts to follow the new doctrine, as they really made themselves "voluntary agents of the Indian spinning mills". Thus pursuing the matter, he had already come to believe in the spinning wheel as an indispensable weapon of carrying out the Swadeshi programme, even in his Ashram, and an obliging and energetic lady had already helped him by finding some spinning wheels that had long been consigned to the loft in some remote villages. Thus had Mr. Gandhi already reached an experimental stage with regard

to the spinning wheel in his Ashram, when he decided to make the new Swadeshi Sabha. the vehicle of his strange gospel of the Spinning wheel. It is, therefore, quite clear that once again he sought to harness the political enthusiasm of the young workers, who had by this time become attached to him, into the service of his ideal of a primitive and self-sufficient society, as he had depicted it in his 'Hind-Swaraj'. And he then—as he continues to do even now—used political and humanitarian arguments only as a thin veneer to make it attractive in the eyes of his political followers.

Yet for the moment it all looked so strange and interesting to us, if only because it was something new, and appeared to some pious believers as fraught with tremendous possibilities. Several fashionable ladies began to crowd to Mr. Gandhi's residence in Bombay, and to learn spinning from some expert spinners. We also organised a branch at Ahmedabad, and I was perhaps one of the first of the political workers to learn spinning in the autumn of 1919. It was so difficult and tiresome, but I felt I should prove guilty of a want of faith if I did not master the art of spinning. Needless to say, most of the yarn that was spun then was absolutely useless for weaving anything. Nor had sufficient weavers been found to handle the comparatively raw and weak thread that could be spun on the wheel. Most of the cloth therefore spun on the wheel was practically wasted; and though the experiments on the spinning wheel were continued in Mr. Gandhi's Ashram and in a few village centres, the political workers were very soon after swept headlong into the Khilafat agitation and the excitement of the Congress session that was to be held in Amritsar during the Christmas Week of 1919. And we even forgot to give a decent burial to the Swadeshi Sabha which Mr. Gandhi had really started with a view to keep himself going for a few months before setting out on his fateful enquiry into the Punjab atrocities. Strangely enough Mr. Gandhi has been forgotten to mention in his autobiography this child of his who died so prematurely.

XXI

IN PUNJAB AT LAST

WHILE Mr. Gandhi was pushing on his propaganda of the Spinning wheel and hammering away at the outrageous sentences passed by the Punjab martial law tribunals, the British Government appointed a Committee composed of officials and some Moderate non-officials under the Chairmanship of Lord Hunter, who held an "independent" enquiry into the happenings in the Punjab. Needless to say the appointment of this Committee was greeted with bitter criticism by the Nationalist Press of India. For the terms of reference submitted to the Committee, as well as its personnel, were considered thoroughly unsatisfactory and disappointing. The All-India Congress Committee which was specially convened to consider the Government announcement had, therefore, no difficulty in deciding to boycott the proceedings of this Committee altogether. "As a logical consequence of boycott of the Hunter Committee it was decided to appoint a non-official Enquiry Committee to hold almost a parallel enquiry on behalf of the Congress. Pandit Motilal Nehru, the late Deshabandhu C. R. Dass, Sjt. Abbas Tyebji, Sjt. M. R. Jayakar and myself (Gandhi) were appointed to this Committee".

This was indeed as it should be. The reader, however, will be surprised to learn that inspite of the Congress boycott of the Hunter Committee, and inspite of his being appointed practically as the non-official Congress Committee, Mr. Gandhi had no difficulty in tendering evidence before the Hunter Committee with reference to the events in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Gujarat. The Resolution to the boycott, of course. had been cleverly worded so as to restrcti its operation to the Punjab. And, therefore, Mr. Gandhi was not required to exercise much ingenuity in consoling himself and satisfying others regarding this extraordinary act of co-operation with the Hunter Committee. He indeed made a strange distinction between co-operation in the Punjab and in the other Provinces. For while he was convinced that he would be only humiliating himself and the nation in leading evidence regarding the Punjab

atrocities before the Hunter Committee as political workers, he felt really called upon to tender his evidence before this Committee in his individual capacity regarding all the things that he had heard and seen in Gujarat and Bombay. One might almost say that he felt he had a guilty conscience in the matter. For, he had no hesitation in shouldering almost the entire responsibility for the happenings in Bombay and Gujarat, in which he had so firmly entrenched himself. He was, therefore, bubbling over with a strange enthusiasm to make the public confession of his moral responsibility before the tribunal that the Government had really set up to whitewash the outrages of officialdom.

The small hall in Hathising Wadi was packed to its capacity when speaking in his solemn measured tones. Mr. Gandhi unfolded his own story of the "memorable week" of April 1919. Lord Hunter was very courteous and urbane. Some other official and non-official British members closely questioned him regarding his responsibility for the outrages in Gujarat. But Sir Chimanlal Satalvad—one of the leaders of the Moderate Party then—as now—most bitterly opposed to Mr. Gandhi's new doctrine of civil disobedience—easily surpassed all his colleagues in the acidity and acrimony which he imported into his interrogations. Mr. Gandhi conducted an interesting passage-at-arms with his Indian friend, who was an original resident of Ahmedabad. And it must be admitted that he easily won the laurels of the debate and evoked the enthusiastic cheers of the crowded audience on more than one occasion.

One or two points in this duel might be noted here. Sir Chimanlal was pressing Mr. Gandhi hard with a view to prove that the programme of civil disobedience being based on high spiritual principles could only be peacefully carried out by highly educated people, and Mr. Gandhi had, therefore, erred grievously in setting the millions of his illiterate and uneducated countrymen on the dangerous path of *Satyagraha*. But Mr. Gandhi quickly turned the tables on his distinguished opponent by reminding him how bravely and cheerfully thousands of his country men and country women, drawn from the labouring classes and illiterate hawkers and traders, had so nobly suffered and distinguished themselves during the *Satyagraha* struggle in South Africa. To

a question by Sir Chimanlal if a high degree of saintly and spiritual culture was not required to enable one to suffer without rancour and resentment, Mr. Gandhi promptly replied "Sir Chimanlal, every woman suffers, and yet every woman is not a saint".

Government further proceeded to fortify its position after Mr. Gandhi began to publish the weekly NAVAJIVAN in Ahmedabad from the beginning of September 1919. The Home Member introduced the Indemnity Bill in the Legislative Council with a view to absolve Police and Military officers from all civil and criminal responsibility regarding their acts during the riots in the Punjab and Gujarat .Such a Bill, though deemed quite the proper thing in all free countries, came upon me wtih a painful surprise. I thought Government had really designed this Biil with a view to prejudice and pre-judge the very question of official responsibility that had been formally referred to the Hunter Committee for enquiry. In my capacity, therefore, as the sub editor of NAVAJIVAN I began to argue the question with Mr. Gandhi. But I was even more painfully surprised when I found Mr. Ganhhi utterly impervious to my argument. He was convinced that Government was perfectly justified in rushing such a Bill through the Council, and that the passing of the measure need not prevent Government from taking any legal or disciplinary action against any officers who might have intentionally committed any outrages. What was, however, even surprising to me was the seemingly cool obstinacy with which Mr. Gandhi held this opinion without deeming it necessary to give any reasons, legal or moral, for doing so.

Dissatisfied, therefore, with his arguments in the matter, I requested his permission to proceed to Bombay to consult some lawyer friends. Frankly, he did not relish the idea. I then made the discovery that Mr. Gandhi wanted me to proceed more in the light of faith than of reason. He wanted me almost implicitly to rely on his word, as he wanted me to imitate his style of writing by writing to his dictation every morning. I instinctively rebelled against such an imposition. For I had thought up till now that he welcomed all difference of opinion and took great pains to convince his opponents by sound arguments. I had never dreamt of agreeing with him in all his thoughts and words when I consented to serve

under him whether as a political follower or as the sub-editor of his paper.

Still, I did proceed to Bombay to take counsel with my legal friends on the Indemnity Bill. Most of them agreed that the Bill was not at all as harmless as Mr. Gandhi would make it out, and could be seriously challenged on several grounds. Fortified by these opinions I submitted them for Mr. Gandhi's consideration. But all that I could get from him was: "You need not have bothered to go to Bombay for such discussions". Then it really dawned upon me more clearly than before that he valued the simple faith of the heart far more than independence of intellect, and that he would prefer to rule over his followers and indeed over the whole country by touching their feelings and by kindling faith in their hearts, than by appealing to the reasoning faculties and their judgment.

Eventually Mr. Gandhi got his much-longed-for permission to proceed to the Punjab, after the 17th October. So the lull in his political activity was again at an end; and once again his journey to the North marked the beginning of a much longer and a more strenuous course of agitation which really closed with his incarceration in Yerawada jail in March, 1922.

Mr. Gandhi had indeed marked time for nearly six months, from the 13th April when he suspended his movement till the end of October when he went to Lahore—after suddenly shining for the first time under the blaze of publicity for about two preceding months. And yet his popularity had not decreased. In fact his vigorous press propaganda against the Punjab martial law regime had, if at all, endeared him more to the hearts of the good people of the Punjab. No wonder then that he made a most triumphant entry into Lahore. When he stepped out at the railway station from his second-class compartment: "The scene that I witnessed", he writes, "on my arrival at Lahore could never be effaced from my memory. The railway station was from end to end one seething mass of humanity. The entire population turned out of doors in eager expectation as if to meet a dear relation after a long separation, and was delirious with joy".

As most of the Punjab leaders were in *jail*, Mr. Gandhi immediately started his work of making enquiries on behalf of the

Congress Sub-Committee in close consultation with Pundit Malaviyaji, Pundit Motilalji and the late Swami Shraddhanandji. This was really the first time that he was thrown into day to day political work with these national leaders. The Enquiry Committee's work also placed him for the first time in intimate contact with the great political stalwart, the late C. R. Das, and M. R. Jayakar. He was naturally quick to study the personal temper and the political potentialities of each one of these great leaders. Indeed it may be easily said that he came, he saw, and he conquered. For his leadership of the *Satyagraha* movement had already given him such a predominant political value—which could indeed be hardly warranted by his loose contact with the Congress politics up till then—that he was virtually awarded dictatorial powers from the very commencement of the enquiries.

"The responsibility for organising the work of the Committee," he writes, "devolved on me, and as the privilege of conducting the enquiry in the largest number of places fell to my lot I got a rare opportunity of observing at close quarters the people of the Punjab and the Punjab villages .. ...The task of drafting the Report of this Committee was also entrusted to me." So Mr. Gandhi not only collected the largest volume of evidence but also drafted the Report which will go down to posterity as one of the most painful and yet one of the most brilliant documents in the history of Indian nationalism.

XXII

IN THE SERVICE OF KHILAFAT.

WHEN Mr. Gandhi had just commenced his enquiries into the martial law regime in the Punjab, he received an invitation to attend a joint conference of Hindus and Mohammedans that was being held in Delhi at the beginning of November 1919 to deliberate on the Khilafat question. The invitation was issued over the joint signatures of the late Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mr. Asaf Ali. The late Swami Shraddhanand who had so ably distinguished himself on the Red Sunday (30th March in Delhi) was appointed the Vice-President of the Conference. The Conference was invited to consider not only the situation arising out of the Khilafat betrayal, but also the question as to whether India should co-operate in the Peace celebrations. "The letter of invitation went on to say among other things......the question of cow protection, as well, would be discussed at the Conference, and it would therefore offer a golden opportunity for the settlement of the cow question."

Before dealing with the discussions at this Conference at which Mr. Gandhi for the first time unfolded his historic plan of peaceful non-co-operation with Government, we must pause to consider for a moment actual contents of the Khilafat question. It will be remembered that Mr. Gandhi had made pointed reference to the rights of the Muslim States and the Muslim sentiments as to their places of wordship in his letter to the Viceroy in the summer of 1918. Since then the war had indeed come to an end and the Treaty of Versailles had nearly been signed. The result was that the British Government received a formai mandate to administer the predominantly Muslim States of Iraq and Palestine, and they had also enthroned a puppet king of their own creation in the Hedjas, which contains the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Nay more. The Sultans of Turkey had not only been the rulers of the entire empire of old Turkey, including Iraq, Arabia and Mesopotamia, but had also been revered as their Khaliphs by the Mohammedans, spread all over the globe, and were supposed to be the protecting arm of Islam for the last four centuries and yet the

old Turkish Empire was not only thus dismembered and three big slices practically appropriated by the Britishers, but the Sultan himself, who had thrown in his lot during the Great War with the German Kaiser, was held practically as a prisoner by the victorious Britishers in his Palace at Constantinople. The Khilafat question thus resolved itself into a practical usurpation of the three provinces so sacred to the Islamic world by the British Government, and the complete suppression of the political and religious authority of the old Sultan of Turkey. And it was against this series of grievous wrongs that the Mussulmans of India raised the banner of the Khilafat agitation.

It is, however, pertinent to point out how these questions were treated by the States affected by the British occupation. The Wahabi Movement had already spread like wildfire in the deserts of Arabia, even during the War, and the Wahabi king, Ibn Saud, had been kept in restraint only by means of heavy bribery by British diplomacy during the War. As soon, however, as the bribe was stopped after the Armistice, Ibn Saud raised his fiery standard against the puppet king, who began very soon to shake on his uncertain throne at Mecca. Arabs again broke out in serious riots against British administration in Mesopotamia. Emir Feisal was speedily kicked out his kingdom of Syria by the French and soon set up on the throne of Baghdad by the obliging Britishers. There was also a resurgence of the Arab movement against the excessive immigration of the Jews, who were being dumped in such large numbers in Palestine under the protection of the British bayonets. While the religious motive behind all these uprisings is indisputable they must be described as really political in every sense of the word. They were all really designed to set up separate and independent Arab republics, thoroughly independent of any foreign influence. And none of them was ever inspired with a view to restore the authority of distant Constantinople on these outlying provinces of the old Turkish Empire.

While the Arabs therefore could be said to be really neutra with regard to the Khilafat question, the Turks who were slowly rising under the leadership of Mustapha Kamal Pasha in the hills of Anatolia were definitely determined not only to drive away the Britishers from both sides of the Bosphorus, but also to do away

with the corrupt and tattered remnants of the religio-political authority of the old Sultan. They were in fact striving to set up—as they did within a few years—a republic on thoroughly secular lines, and to do away with all such age-old reactionary customs, like the seclusion and veiling of women, which had kept Turkey far behind in the race of modern progress. So, strange as it might appear, the erstwhile soldiers and civilians of the Turkish Empire were waging a ruthless war against the authority of the Britishers as well as of their Sultan Khalif, when the Indian Mussulmans started their curious agitation to restore the sovereignty of the Khalif on the Golden Horn.

It is also pertinent to add that neither the Sunni Arabs of Egypt nor the Shiahs of Persia interested themselves in this Khilafat agitation at any stage or in any form.

But the Khilafat Conference that met in Delhi at the beginning of November 1919, thought little and cared even less for what was happening in the very countries in which it professed such deep interest. Apparently nobody bothered to know if their movement had any parallel in any other Muslim lands. The Mussulman leaders, mostly composed of the priestly and semi-priestly classes—the Ulamas and the Maulanas—easily convinced themselves that the British Government had betrayed the sacred cause of the Khilafat. Of course, the British Government had imposed its iron heel on many Muslim lands in flagrant violation of its solemn promise during the War to uphold the freedom of the Arabs. But real politics was at a discount in these gatherings, which shouted hoarsely on the other hand to restore the political as well as the religious sovereignty of an effete and corrupt Sultan against whom no less than against the Britishers his own erstwhile subjects had already raised their standard of rebellion The Hindu leaders invited to this Conference were also men like Mr. Gandhi and Swami Shraddhanand, whose politics were always tinged with a deep raligious dye. And the high position that Mr. Gandhi had already achieved in militant politcs on account of his *Satyagraha* campaign enabled him to convince his Hindu colleagues at the Conference about rhe clear duty of the Hindus of India to stand shoulder to shoulder in any fight that their Mahommaden brother waged to redress the Khilafat wrong.

So the Conference was easily persuaded to embark on a thundering propaganda with a view to compel the Government to restore the authority of that Khilafat. The Conference further decided to make an impressive demonstration of deep resentment against the erring policy of the British Government by refusing to co-operate in the celebrations of the Armistice Day that was fixed for 11th November. "There was a suggestion from some quarters", writes Mr. Gandhi, "that the Punjab question should be tacked on to that of the Khilafat wrong. I opposed the proposal. The Punjab question I said was a local affair, and could not therefore, weigh with us in our decision to participate or not in the peace celebrations. If we mixed up the local question with the Khilafat question, which arose directly out of the peace terms, we should be guilty of a serious indiscretion". And yet not a few months passed before Mr. Gandhi appealed to the country to start a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation against the joint wrongs of the Punjab and the Khilafat !

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XXIII

BIRTH OF "NON-CO-OPERATION"

THE Conference then went on to discuss the most important question of militant programme to be adopted in case the British Government eventually betrayed—as it appeared certain it would—the sacred cause of the Khilafat. The Conference, of course found no difficulty in passing a resolution urging "both Hindus and Mohammedans to take the Swadeshi vows, and as the natural corollary to it, to boycott foreign goods. Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the great Urdu poet and politician, however, sounded a discordant note. "His object was to wreak vengeance on the British Empire in case justice was denied in the matter of the Khilafat. Accordingly he brought in a counter proposal for the boycott purely of British goods so far as practicable". So the Conference again became the battle ground of the rival policies of the Bengal and Deccan School of boycott of British goods and cloth—espoused here by Hasrat Mohani—and the novel method of boycotting foreign goods and especially cloth generally propounded by Mr. Gandhi, with a view to promote the manufacture of necessary cloth and goods in the country. Mr. Gandhi's arguments on this behalf have now, of course, become pretty familiar. Resentful as he was of the British policy of plunder and oppression, he would not countenance the boycott of British goods, as it implied hatred of the British people. His weapons of warfare must always be clean and must be free from the taint of hatred, which was only another form of violence. Not content, however, with this spiritual argument, he airily disposed of the plan of boycotting British goods as thoroughly impracticable and ineffective.

"My speech," he writes, "was followed with the closest attention by those present, and evoked a full measure of support among those on the platform, and speaker after speaker rose to deliver speeches in support of my views. "The leaders were able to see that not only would the boycott of British goods fail of its purpose, but would, if adopted, make of them a laughing stock. There was hardly a man present in that Assembly but had some article of British manufacture on his person. Many of the audience,

therefore, realised that nothing but harm could result from adopting a Resolution that even those who voted for it were unable to carry out".

I would leave it to the readers to judge the value of this argument in view of the most valuable experience gained in this matter during the great boycott campaign of 1930-31. The younger leaders openly proclaimed the boycott of British cloth and goods, even to the extent of giving preference to non-British foreign goods to British goods after Mr. Gandhi was incarcerated; and it is now a matter of history that this boycott enforced through the large army of Congress volunteers, men and women, boys and girls, proved so effective in reducing the imports of British cloth and even other manufactures that it gave a serious alarm to the British Government and nearly compelled it to release and open negotiations with Mr. Gandhi.

Mr. Gandhi was, however, not content with the adoption of the Swadeshi Resolution that was to be carried out, even irrespective of the fate of the Khilafat. It was really at this Conference that he for the first time raised the War Cry of non co-operation, with a view to compel Government to do justice to righteous Mahommedan demands. "I described it", he writes, "by the word non-coperation, an expression that I used for the first time at this meeting. As the Maulana (Hasrat Mohani) was delivering his speech to me that it was vain for him to talk about effective resistance to a Government with which he was co-operating in more than one thing, if resort to arms was impossible or undesirable. The only true resistance to the Government, it, therefore, seemed to me, was to cease to co-operate with it. Thus I arrived at the word "non co-operation". Be it added, however, that here again—as in the former *Satyāgraha* campaign—Mr. Gandhi as he himself admits it "had not then a clear idea of all its manifold implications, and the only details that then suggested themselves to him were the renunciation of Government titles and honours and withdrawal from Government service.

The Conference was also designed to discuss the question of Cow Protection. The Mahommedan leaders had evidently thrown out this bait with a view to secure the support of the orthodox Hindu leaders. Needless to say Mr. Gandhi had set his heart on

this question almost from the moment that he landed in India. It may also be recalled that he had hoped to prevent cow slaughter by securing the personal confidence and political alliance of the Ali Brothers. It would, therefore, appear that he would immediately seize this golden opportunity of securing valuable guarantees for preventing cow slaughter from the Mussulman leaders, so that he could induce the orthodox Hindu and Nationalist leaders to support the case of the Khilafat.

Mr. Gandhi, however, went about his business in a very shrewd manner. Even in reply to the letter of invitation he suggested that "the two questions (Khilafat and Cow Protection) should not be mixed up together or considered in the spirit of a bargain but should be decided on their own merits and treated separately".

During the discussions he was even more explicit. "I contended", he writes, "that if the Khilafat question had a just and legitimate basis, as I believe it had, and if the Government had really committed a gross injustice, the Hindus were bound to stand by the Mussulmans in their demand for the redress of the Khilafat wrong. It would ill-become them to bring in the Cow question in this connection or to use the occasion to make terms with the Mussulmans, just as it would ill-become the Mussulmans to offer to stop cow slaughter as a price for the Hindu support on the Khilafat question".

"But it would be another matter," he shrewdly adds, "and quite graceful and would reflect great credit on them, if the Mussulmans of their own free-will stopped cow slaughter out of regard for the religious sentiments of the Hindus and their sense of duty towards them as neighbours and children of the same soil". Such friendly response was indeed not long in coming. In spite of his warning, Maulana Abdul Bari said: "No matter whether the Hindus help us or not, the Mussulmans ought as the countrymen of the Hindus out of regard for the latter's susceptibilities, to give up cow slaughter". And yet even Mr. Gandhi could not have doubted that this great Maulana would never have thought of making such an appeal if his heart had not been touched by the support of Mr. Gandhi and other leaders in the matter of the Khilafat campaign.

The Conference thus heralded the dawn of the non-co-operation movement, which was carried on successfully from 1920 to the beginning of 1922. It also heralded of the dawn of a new era—however short-lived—of Hindu-Mohammedan co-operation and unity. Let it not be forgotten, however, that India paid a heavy price for these partial successes. A great national movement was perhaps for the first time grounded on a religious and somewhat superstitious grievances of a section of the people. And this occasion proved a veritable signal for othodox and mediæval Maulanas, Moulvis and Ulemas on the one hand, and for orthodox Hindu sadhus, saints and sanyasis on the other, to rush to the new political platform. Consequently, religious arguments and sacred texts easily usurped the place of political expediencies and rational argument. The authority of Rama and Krishna, Allah and Koran was invoked in every second sentence in the political speeches. Large masses were addressed henceforth as Hindu and Mohammedan, instead of as Indians. The religious sentiments, contrary and contradictory as they were in several respects, were somehow jointly evoked in support of the practical programme of non-co-operation. In a word, veritable floodgates of old-world superstitions and crazy sentiments were let loose on the people of India with a view to rush them headlong into a new programme which was to be implicitly followed in the light of religious belief and emotional enthusiasm to the exclusion of the cold light of reason and arguments of political expediency.

XXIV

MR. GANDHI resumed his work of enquiry into the Punjab atrocities after the Khilafat Conference. The Reform Bill was then passed into law by the British Parliament. His Majesty the King in giving his Royal assent to the Reform Act issued a proclamation on the eve of the Congress under which hundreds of the martial law prisoners of the Punjab, including Lala Harkishanlal and other leaders, were released. A kind of general amnesty was also granted under which Maulanas Mohammed and Shaukat Ali were realesed from their internment camp at Chhindwara. They all arrived almost straight from their *jails* to the Congress.

"The people's joy knew no bounds," writes Mr. Gandhi. "Pundit Motilal Nehru, who at the sacrifice of his splendid practice, had made the Punjab his headquarters, and had done great service, was the President of the Congress. The late Swami Shraddhanandji was the President of the Reception Committee". Delegates flocked in thousands to the Congress to take part in the impending national decision on the vexed questions of reforms. Mr. Tilak from Poona and Messrs. C. R. Das and Bepin Chandra Pal from Bengal brought large contingents from their Provinces to fight a pitched battle on the great question.

It will be recalled that the special Session of the Congress had already denounced the reform proposals outlined in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, as thoroughly inadequate and unsatisfactory, and had urged upon the British Government the necessity of expanding and developing them along democratic lines with a view to make them acceptable to the people of India. The Congress delegation had striven with might and main to persuade the British Houses of Parliament to amend the Bill along Congress lines. Mr. Tilak, Mrs. Besant, Mr. V. J. Patel and other leaders had tendered evidence before the Joint Committee of the House of the Parliament with a view to press the Congress demands on the attention of the British Government. In spite of all this propaganda in England and in India, the Bill, as it emerged as an Act of Parliament, remained except for some small immaterial changes, the same as before. From a constitutional point of view, therefore, the

Amritsar Congress, following the lead of the previous Session at Bombay, was naturally expected to denounce the reforms as unsatisfactory and inacceptable,

Messrs. Tilak and Das were determined to secure an adverse decision from the Congress against the reforms. And it may be confidently predicted that the Congress would have followed the lead of these militant stalwarts if only Mr. Gandhi had not been in the field.

But Mr. Gandhi had already planted himself in the Punjab. He was carrying out the commission of the Congress in enquiring into the Punjab atrocities. He had suddenly become, therefore, a power to be reckoned with. He was on good terms with Pandit Malaviya, whose moderate tendencies stood in clear contrast to those of Mr. Tilak and Mr. Das. Pundit Malaviya, therefore, decided cleverly to use Mr. Gandhi as a trump card against the almost invincible opposition of the Extremist leaders, and Mr. Gandhi after much hesitation eventually decided to plunge into the stormy sea of Congress politics.

We have already seen that Mr. Gandhi had been persuaded by Mr. Shastri to view the reforms in a fairly favourable light. And incredible as it might appear, Mr. Gandhi's views on the subject had hardly been affected by the passing of the Black Act, by his own *Satyagraha* Movement, and by the reign of terror Government enacted in the Punjab and Bombay. Nor was his opinion on the constitutional question at all influenced by his espousal of the Khilafat cause. The the Treaty of Sevres was not yet signed. Of course, he was not wholly satisfied even by the King's announcement. But "I felt at that time," he writes, "that the reforms, though defective, could still be accepted. I felt in the King's announcement and its language the hand of Lord Sinha, and it lent a ray of hope".

One may well assess the measure of Mr. Gandhi's political acumen by the hopefulness with which he was inspired on seeing the hand of such a rank Imperialist as Lord Sinha, in so official a document as the King's announcement.

A battle royal, therefore, raged in the Subjects' Committee and eventually in the open Congress, between Mr. Gandhi's views on

the one hand and Messrs. Tilak's and Das' views on the other. "I felt that a Resolution, not rejecting but accepting the Reforms was the correct thing. Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das on the other hand, held firmly to the view that the Reforms ought to be rejected as wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory". But there was one defect in the position of Mr. Das. While he denounced the Reforms, he did not appeal to the country to reject them wholesale by boycotting the new legislatures that might be inaugurated under the Reform Act. Nor did he then evolve the policy of masterly obstruction and destruction of the Councils that won such a great following afterwards. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, could easily put them on the horns of a dilemma. Either accept the Reforms and work them, however inadequate they might be, or reject them and boycott the Councils. The Extremist Party really foundered on this dilemma. And an amendment was easily suggested in the course of the Congress debate to bridge the aparent division between the two sets of leaders. So the Congress Resolution was presented for unanimous approval to the Congress. "The *pandal* was rent with the clapping of hands and the erstwhile gloomy faces of the audience lit up with joy".

The Congress then appointed a small Committee composed of Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Kelkar and Mr. I. B. Sen (the last two to represent Mr. Tilak and Mr. Das respectively) to frame a new constitution for the Congress. The existing constitution had already proved thoroughly unsatisfactory on account of the new tide in the National movement. So Mr. Gandhi easily secured another key position in the Congress as the new maker of the Congress Constitution, and "with the assumption of this responsibility I may be said to have made my real entrance into the Congress politics".

The last Congress that he attended was in Calcutta, 1917. He could hardly then be designated as a leader of any importance in Congress politics. Illness prevented him from attending the two Sessions of 1918. But one year more and he was acclaimed at the Amritsar Congress at the end of 1919 as one of the three or four principal leaders of Congress organisation in the country.

XXV

DRAFTING OF CONGRESS PUNJAB COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

MR. GANDHI concluded his enquiries in the Punjab and returned to Ahmedabad in the beginning of 1920. He then naturally got busy preparing the Draft Report for the Congress Punjab Committee. He fully realised the gravity of the disclosures he was about to make by the publication of this Report, and its tremendous value in raising the pitch of excitement and agitation throughout the country. He, therefore, naturally became impatient to finish the Report. And yet he was painfully anxious that the document about to emerge from his hands should prove a correct statement of facts, every one of which could be borne out by the weight of overwhelming evidence. Nor did he desire that the Report should suffer from any defects of draftsmanship. He weighed every sentence and every word over and over again in his mind before he passed it finally. And when we consider the vast volume of the evidence that he was required to sift for the purpose, and the bulk of the Report—we can easily imagine what an amount of strenuous work he must have put in practically sigle-handed in the latest stages of its revision.

So Mr. Gandhi practically imprisoned himself within the four walls of his small room in the Ashram for many days and weeks when he was almost invisible and inaccessible. He worked then at the rate of nearly twenty-twenty two hours a day, practically leaving him only two to four hours for food and sleep. Indeed, the rate of his high speed work staggered us all. Even his nearest and dearest followers and colleagues deemed it cruel to disturb him even for a second. It was only under the pressure of very special circumstances that he snatched an hour from the Report to come hurriedly to the city of Ahmedabad for any function or Meeting. And the very sight of his extraordinary absorption and his sustained industry served only to feed the fires of our faith in his mircaculous powers, and to intensify the feeling of electric tension for the moment of his final explosion.

I asked him once casually how he could possibly work for twenty-two hours in a day. "It is very simple", he replied, "All that one has to do work more and to sleep less is to reduce your food. When I was working at the Punjab Report I remember I used to eat only once in the early morning. and then also took only milk and a little fruit. The secret of sustained mental exertion and continuous work lies in the control and regulation of food".

This extraordinary strain on Mr. Gandhis mind haunted us almost like a nightmare, and we prayed indeed for the early completion of his strenuous labours. The Report was eventually finished bv the end of March (31st March) and published during April 1920. As is now well-known the Committee made every startling disclosures of the most monstrous tortures and barbarities that had been perpetrated by many civil, military and police officers and men in the various towns and villages of the Punjab. The Committee, among other things, asked for the recall of the Viceroy and the dismissal from service of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, then Governor of the Punjab, General Dyer, the perpetrator of the Jallianwalla massacre, and some other Indian and British officers. The sensational points in the Report were speedily broadcast all over the country, through newspapers, pamphlets and speeches and raised a storm cf horror and indignation over the land. Mr. Gandhi had indeed worked wisely and well and he was fully rewarded for his strenuous labours by the almost electric thrill he succeeded in producing all over the country by the publication of the Report.

Nay more, in presenting the Draft Report for the consideration of his distinguished colleagues at Benares "within a stone's throw of the waters of the Ganges"—Mr. Gandhi asked not merely for their mental approval and signatures, but for their whole-hearted association in any political fight that might be deemed necessary to have the recommendations enforced by Government. While the Committee, therefore, has been accused for having erred on the side of moderation—as it asked only for the dismissal and not for the prosecution of the prepetrators of the Punjab horrors—Mr. Gandhi had the supreme satisfaction of having tied up his colleagues in a solemn pact to support the non-co-operation Campaign that he had already then in view. "The Commissioners, he wrote in an article in YOUNG INDIA (March 16, 1921) passed many an anxious hour over the matter......The recommendation was hotly

debated among them, and they came to the unanimous conclusion that India could only gain by refraining from prosecution. Mr. Das in a notable speech at Patna recently, referred to the compact then made between the Commissioners, that while and if they reduced their recommendation to a minimum they must solemnly resolve to enforce them at the risk of their lives. The Commissioners are, therefore, non-co-operators as a matter of simple duty".

Thus Gandhi killed two birds with one stone. He threw a veritable bomb-shell on the nation by publishing the Punjab Report, and at the same time he secured solemn pledges in advance from Mr. Das, the lion of Bengal and the most forward politician of India, Mr. Jayakar, the Moderate Advocate of Bombay, and Mr. Abbas Tyabji, the revered Muslim ex-judge of Baroda, to join any movement that would be obviously necessary to enforce even the moderate demands of the Committee. And it must be remembered that these pledges were secured towards the end of March 1920, when the non-co-operation Movement though already contemplated was yet in the womb of time.

Meanwhile the Khilafat Movement was also proceeding apace. A Khilafat deputation, headed by Dr. Ansari, waited on the Viceroy on January 19, 1920. The Viceroy's reply, of course, was thoroughly disappointing. The Muslim leaders then issued a statement recording their firm conviction that "should the peace terms result unfavourably to Muslim religion and sentiments they would place an undue strain upon Muslim loyalty," and demanding that "Arabia as delimited by Muslim authority and the Holy places of Islam must continue under the control of the Khalif". The third Khilafat Conference was then convened in Bombay in February 1920, and it expressed its confidence in the deputation going to England under the leadership of Maulana Muhammad Ali, and again issued an important manifesto laying down the minimum Muslim demands and reminding the British Government of the solemn pledges made during the War, with a view to enlist the support of the Muslim people. While the deputation, however, was still in Europe the terms of the Treaty of Sevres with Turkey were published on the 14th May, 1920. "The publication of the proposed peace terms," writes Babu Rajendra Prasad in his introduction, to YOUNG INDIA (S. Ganesan, 1922) "caused the deepest indignation, and

synchronising as it did with the publication of the Hunter Committee's Report (the official report on the Punjab riots), the whole country was ablaze. The Khilafat Committee met at Bombay to deliberate upon Mahatma Gandhi's non-co operation project, and adopted it on the 28th May, 1920 as the only means now left to the Muslims. On the 30th May the All-India Congress Committee met at Benares to discuss the Hunter Report and the Turkish peace terms, and after a long debate decided to hold a special session of the Congress to consider the question of non-co-operation".

But Mr. Gandhi had decided not to wait for the verdict of the Congress. He had decided on the principle and programme of non-co-operation himself, and had already committed the Khilafat Committee and Conference to that cause. For it is well-known that he was the real guide and expert of the Khilafat Committee which had from its very first Conference, held at Delhi on the 23rd November, 1919, placed itself under his sole direction and dictatorship. It may also be noted that Gandhi even before the Hunter Committee's Report and the terms of the Turkish Treaty were published, had in the course of an article in YOUNG INDIA (5th May, 1920) elaborated the four stages of non-co-operation compaign: (1) Giving up titles and honorary posts. (2) Withdrawal from Government service. (3) Withdrawal of the police and military. (4) Suspension of taxes. Within a few days after the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Benares he induced the Khilafat Committee to appoint an Executive Committee called the Non-co-operative Committee to lay down and enforce a detailed programme at Allahabad on the 3rd June, 1920. The meeting further decided to give one month's ultimatum to the Viceroy of India and the British Government that in the event of no satisfaction being received regarding the Khilafat claim, the Mussulmans of India would be compelled to inaugurate the campaign of non-co-operation from the first of August 1920.

"This meeting," writes Mr. Gandhi (Cf. YOUNG INDIA, 9th June 1920) "was preceded by a joint Hindu-Mohammedan meeting, at which Hindu leaders were invited to give their views. Mr. Besant, Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Sapru, Mr. Motilal Nehru, Mr.t Chintamani and others were present at the meeting". Most of them, of course, firmly protested against the policy of non-co-operation. But their advice was sought, of course, only to be rejected with scant courtesy.

Undeterred then by the protests and scruples of these moderate politicians, both Mr. Gandhi and the Muslim leaders issued manifestoes on the 22nd June 1920 in pursuance of the Allahabad decision "declaring that they would resort to non-co-operation if by the 1st August 1920, the peace terms were refused, and calling upon the Viceroy to resign his office if the Muslim demands were refused by His Majesty's Government". On the 7th July Mr. Gandhi further proceeded to elaborate the details of the first stage of Non-co-operation on behalf of the Non-co-operation Committee of the Khilafat Conference as follows :

(1) Surrender of titles and offices. (2) Non participation in Government loans. (3) Suspenison by lawyers of their practice and settlements of civil disputes by private arbitration. (4) Boycott of Government Schools by parents. (5) Boycott of the Reform Councils. (6) Non-participation in Government parties and such other functions. (7) Refusal to accept any civil or military post in Mesopotamia or any other old Turkish countries. (8) Swadeshi propaganda.

Finally, as no satisfaction was received from the Viceroy during the month of July Mr. Gandhi inaugurated the Non-co-operation Movement on the 1st August, by returning the medal received by him for his humanitarian work and war services in South Africa, and by calling upon the country to observe a peaceful *hartal*, and holding meetings everywhere to protest against the wrongs done by the Government. And as India's fate would have it, on that very day, the 1st August, India's great patriot, Mr. Tilak, died, after a long illness in Bombay, and his funeral procession was attended by Mr. Gandhi and hundreds of thousands of Bombay's population as a mark of signal honour that had never been paid before to any departed patriot in the memory of living man.

The people said that the coincidence of Mr. Tilak's death with the beginning of Mr. Gandhi's movement showed that Gandhi was henceforth elevated to the high pedestal which Mr. Tilak had held in India's politics for over quarter of a century.

XXVI

MR. GANDHI AND THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT.

HAVING RECOUNTED briefly the main incidents leading to the inauguration of the Non-co-operation Campaign, let us pause for moment to consider how the different sections of the Indian population were affected by the different acts of this political drama. And it would be useful to begin this survey by recounting how Mr. Gandhi had, during the previous year of 1919, already captured the key positions of political power in the country.

Mr. Gandhi had taken three distinct moves to place himself at the head of the revolutionary mass struggle in 1919. Firstly, by inaugurating his Satyagraha struggle against the Rowlatt Act he had secured the adhesion of the most virile and militant elements to the politics of the country. He had also captured by so doing, the imagination and roused the heart of the upper strata of Indian society. Secondly, by presiding over the Khilafat Conference at Delhi on the 3rd November, 1919, and wholly identifying himself from that date with what appeared to us then was purely a matter pertaining to the orthodox Mohammedans. Mr. Gandhi went straight to the citadel of Mohammedan orthodoxy and caught the real lever which would eventually secure him the following of the vast millions of comparatively backward Mohammedan masses. This was indeed a notable advance even on the efforts of the previous Mohammedan leaders of the Muslim League, who, though using Communalism as a prop for Separatist political propaganda, generally divorced orthodox religionism from practical politics. So, Mr. Gandhi secured the undisputed and unprecedented leadership of the most powerful political vanguard of the vast Hindu and Mohammedan masses of the country such as no other leader had ever secured before. Thirdly and finally, he made a humble approach to organisational leadership by being appointed on the Committee to draft the new constitution of the Congress.

And yet it was not smooth sailing even for Mr. Gandhi in the beginning of 1920. Things naturally went slowly in the beginning as the fate of Turkey was not yet sealed, and neither the official nor the unofficial Report on the Punjab was published. Still Mr. Gandhi went on making innumerable speeches and publishing a number of articles every week to concentrate all attention on the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. He expounded exhaustively, he argued with friends and foes alike, and replied with consummate ability to all kinds of objections that were showered upon him, not only from India but from England and other countries. He had by this time mastered the Hindi and the Urdu languages sufficiently to enable him to address thousands of Mohammedans wherever he went. And he, a Hindu of Hindus, developed such an extraordinary knack of touching and exciting the tenderest and the deepest feelings of the most ignorant as well as the most progressive Mohammedans alike, that he nearly succeeded in developing their militant energy and enrhusiasm to a veritable pitch of explosion. With every Khilafat Conference and Khilafat Committee meeting held, with every Khilafat day observed, with every bit of fresh news percolating into India regarding the fate of the Khilafat, Mr. Gandhi gradually developed from a persuasive speaker to an enthusiastic propagandist, and finally assumed the role of a leader of a great non-violent Jehad for the rescue and protection of Islam in the world.

But all this fiery propaganda which Mr. Gandhi was cleverly pitching to an increasingly higher key every week failed to convince the intelligence and move the hearts of the political intelligentsia of the non-Mohammedan masses in the country. Mr. Gandhi was, of course, known to be working with feverish haste and unparalleled industry on the Punjab Report. The political world, therefore, was indeed in an expectant and almost a nervous mood. ready to lead a new agitation for obtaining justice for Punjab and freedom for India. The national week was also celebrated at Mr. Gandhi's instance from the 6th to the 13th April with a view to keep the memory of the heroism of the unforgettable days of 1919. Still it was clearly felt that Mr. Gandhi had made Khilafat his principle and the Punjab only a subsidiary plank in his campaign, and the political non-Mohammedan workers and masses were not easily infected and aroused by the religio-political zeal of Mr. Gandhi in

the cause of Islam. They frankly felt puzzled and perplexed over his continuous outpourings on the Khilafat question. And they hoped that the Punjab Report would very soon place the national issue in the front rank of practical politics, and form a real struggle for the emancipation of the land.

Then devastating blows fell in rapid succession over us in April and May 1920. First came the horrible exposures contained in the Gandhi Committee's Report on the Punjab. Then the news of the Treaty of Sevres, by which the old Ottoman Empire was finally dismembered and Turkey was deprived of all power over Arabia and Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine. And finally, the Hunter Committee's Report on the Punjab served to add insult to injury and to fan the flames of popular resentment and indignation throughout the land. All political workers alike then felt indeed as never before that the hour of action had at last come; and some action, urgent, decisive and direct, must be taken.

Mr. Gandhi had, of course, taken time by the forelock and issued his programme of the four stages of non-co-operatian on the 5th May 1919. It was even adopted by the Khilafat Committee, which also appointed a special Committee to carry out Mr. Gandhi's programme under his own direction. It could hardly be doubted that the Mussalmans of India, wounded to the quick and exasperated beyond measure by the unholy treaty which the Sultan was almost compelled to sign at the point of the bayonet, were indeed ready to take to any action Mr. Gandhi would indicate to them. But it was quite clear that the Mohammedans of India alone could not by themselves create the desired effect on the Government. The Congress Committee had indeed shunted off the hour of decision for a few months by deciding to hold a special session at Calcutta in the ensuing September. The question then was, if the political intelligentsia of the country and the non-Mohammedan masses would rally to Mr. Gandhi's standard of non-violent rebellion for redressing the double wrong of the Punjab and Khilafat, even before the Congress gave a decisive lead in the matter?

Now that the Punjab and the Khilafat issues had been practically decided by Government, we of the old guard of Gujarat and Bombay were compelled under the furious onslaughts of Mr. Gandhi's propaganda to face the issues fully and squarely.

Mr. Gandhi, we felt, being such an orthodox and conscientious Hindu, might feel compelled to so thoroughly identify himself with the Muslim standpoint on the Khilafat question. Most of us, however, were sceptics, if not thorough atheists. We prided ourselves on having risen superior to or defied the superstitious beliefs and hoary customs that shackled the minds and lives of the masses of the land. We had never bargained with Mr. Gandhi to join him in any semi-religious or religio-political movement. We have joined him solely with a view to follow him on any path of advanced direct action to wage purely political fights with a view to secure national liberty. The question then that faced us was, if the Khilafat campaign could be construed even as a purely political fight (for we were then really called upon to fight under the banner of the Khilafat Commitee under Mr. Gandhi's leadership, as the issues of the Punjab and the politicai freedom had been left over for the consideration of the Congress that was to meet after a few months). In fine, what was our duty at this supreme moment? This was the question that began to be seriously discussed in all political circles that were frankly perplexed and amazed at the increasing militant tones and tactics of Mr. Gandhi, who began really to surpass even the most orthodox Mohammedan in his fanatical zeal for the cause of Islam.

First then to take up the Khilafat question. What was the real political content of the question, shorn of all its religious and superstitious trappings? Mr. Gandhi put it in a nutshell on the 10th March 1920 in the following words :—

"Briefly put, the claim is that the Turk should retain European Turkey subject to full guarantees for the protection of non-Muslim races under the Turkish Empire, and that the Sultan should control the holy places of Islam, and should have suzerainty over Jazirat-ul-Arab, *i. e.* Arabia as defined by the Muslim savants, subject to self-governing rights being given to the Arabs if they so desire".

Questioned again and again regarding the right of the Arab inhabitants of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Palestine, Mr. Gandhi stated (YOUNG INDIA, 12th May, 1920) that "the Mohammedans, as is known to everybody who has at all studied the case, have never asked for Turkish Rule in Arabia in opposition to the Arabs",

and that "all they ask for is Turkish suzerainty over Arabia which should guarantee complete self-rule for the Arabs".

In reply again to one Mr. Edmund Candler, an English journalist, regarding his plea for the independence of the Arabs, Mr. Gandhi wrote as follows in YOUNG INDIA of 26th May, 1920.

"I think one would nurse by every legitimate means the spirit of independence in the brave Arabs, but I shudder to think what would happen to them under the schemes of exploitation of their country by the greedy capitalists, protected as they will be by the mandatory powers. If the pledge is to be fulfilled let these places have full self-Government with suzerainty to be retained with Turkey as has been suggested by the TIMES OF INDIA. Let there be all necessary guarantees taken from Turkey about the internal independence of the Arabs. But to remove that suzerainty, to deprive the Khalif of the wardenship of the holy places, is to render Khilafat a mockery, which no Mohammedan can possibly look upon with equanimity".

Now, trying ourselves to rid India of the "suzerainty" of the British Empire, we could not share Mr. Gandhi's enthusiasm for imposing the suzerainty of the Turkish Sultan over the outlying Provinces of Mesopotamia and Arabia. Perhaps we thought Mr. Gandhi had the excuse of his ignorance of Turkish history. Otherwise he might have known better about the efforts of the Turkish revolutionaries and about the almost ceaseless rebellions in which the Arabs of Mesopotamia, Palestine and other Provinces had broken out against oppression and barbarous misrule of Turks in the past centuries. In any event we felt that the corrupt and effete monarchy of Constantinople had received an irretrievable blow from the results of the last War, and was bound to collapse under the joint attacks of the Allies, the Turkish revolutionaries, and the rebel Arab. What remained, therefore, to us, to consider was the question of the independence of the Arab States and the Turkish revolutionaries from British authority and interference. And the question that faced us then was, if we, the helpless slaves of the British, were qualified or entitled to fight for another people who were also being ensalved by the British.

I had frequent discussions during these months with my friend and colleague, Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, with whom I was then staying. He shared my anxiety and perplexity to the full. Often he told me: "Gandhiji is writing once again with full steam, but his articles to-day miss the fire and lack the point of his rousing appeals issued during the Rowlatt Act Campaign last year". Nor was he inspired with any enthusiasm for the Khilafat cause which Mr. Gandhi was trying to infuse in us with ever increasing passion every day. Vallabhbhai has a keen sense of humour, and we had many unholy jokes and laughs over the sacred cause of the Khilafat. "Imagine", he said once, "our fighting for the independence of the Arabs of Arabia and Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia, when we ourselves are held as slaves under the British bayonets in our own land. Isn't it funny beyond words!" And so we went round and round the subject, and yet our perplexities and anxieties only increased with Mr. Gandhi's determination to bring the matter to a conclusion.

We were indeed burning with a feverish enthusiasm to fight the Government over a clear political issue fairly and squarely. But Mr. Gandhi's articles and speeches in those days were so completely warped and befogged with pompous religious formulas and obscurantist dogmas that they thoroughly left us cold. Nor were our minds more clearly illuminated when he at last sent his ultimatum to the Viceroy on the 22nd of June, 1920. After recounting the oft repeated story of the breach of the pledges given by British Ministers during the War to protect the Khilafat and the Holy places of Islam, he wrote:

"In these circumstances the only course open to one like me is either in despair to sever all connection with British Rule, or, if I still retained faith in the inherent superiority of the British constitution to all others at present in vogue, to adopt such means as will rectify the wrong done, and thus restore confidence. I have not lost faith in such superiority, and I may not have hope that somehow or other justice will yet be rendered if we show the required capacity for suffering. Indeed, my conception of the constitution is that it helps only those who are ready to help themselves. I do not believe that it protects the weak. It gives free scope to the strong to maintain in their strength and develop it; the weak under it go to the wall".

"It is then because I believe in the British constitution, that I may advise my Mohammedan friends to withdraw their support from your Excellency's Government, and the Hindus to join them should the peace terms not be revised in accordance with the solemn pledges of Ministers and the Muslim sentiment".

Then Gandhi went to say that, after rejecting the alternatives of violence and emigration on a wholesale scale, he had advised the Mohammedans and the Hindus "not to be party to the injustice, by ceasing to co-operate with the Government". He admitted, of course, that though "non-co-operation was the only dignified and constitutional form of such direct action", it was "attended with grave risks" when practised by the masses of the people in the country. But he consoled himself with the reflection that "not to run some risks now will be to incur much greater risks, if not actual destruction to law and order".

So Mr. Gandhi in his own word was only trying to direct the fury of the Mussalmans into a peaceful channel, so as to avert the almost certain outbreak of a bloody revolution in the country. And the whole campaign was designed to reconcile once again the resentful and indignant people of India, to the British constitution which he considered superior to all the others, even though it only protected the strong and drove the weak to the wall. Those of us, therefore, who were really inspired with the clear desire of uprooting the British constitution itself from the country, could not possibly be roused by such a semi-loyalist, half-hearted appeal.

We then glanced at the practical programme that Mr. Gandhi set out before us with a view "to bend the Government to the people's will". It will be remembered that when Mr. Gandhi first recommended a policy of non-co-operation to the first Khilafat Conference in November 1919 at Delhi, he had only vaguely thought of renouncing Government titles and Government service. He elaborated four states of the programme—referred to above—almost for the first time in the course of an article published on the 5th May in YOUNG INDIA. Even this looked at first sight thoroughly impracticable, unpromising and uninspiring. For the first two stages really expressed more of a pious wish than a political programme. Nobody could imagine a large number of title-holders to renounce their titles, or Government servants to break

away from their fixed moorings. The third stage of withdrawing all the police and military looked indeed serious, as even such a propaganda might be considered a veritable act of boldness, even though it might not meet with any practical success. But Mr. Gandhi referred in that same article to this third stage as "a distant goal". The fourth stage of suspension of taxes easily appealed to all of us as the most formidable and the most practical item of the whole programme. But Mr. Gandhi referred to it as a "still more remote" goal and admitted beforehand that it was "fraught with the greatest danger". To sum up then, the whole campaign was to be really directed to securing the renunciation of titles by title-holders and of Government service by its loyal servants, but it asked the large masses of the people themselves to take no direct political action until the fourth stage was reached in a somewhat distant future. No wonder then that in spite of the vehement zeal and pious enthusiasm with which Mr. Gandhi tried to impress this programme on our minds, it fell thoroughly flat and left us cold.

Nor was the *modus operandi* of affecting Government through the instrumentality of this programme calculated to bring conviction nearer to our minds. Mr. Gandhi summed up the whole thing in one word—the law of suffering. We were asked to believe that the heart of the Britishers, hard as it was, would be eventually melted into considerate pity by the sighs of the incalculable suffering that the people of India would invite upon themselves by resorting to the four-fold programme of non-co-operation. In the course of a special article on the subject (YOUNG INDIA, 16 June 1920) Mr. Gandhi wrote :

"No country has ever risen without being purified by the fire of suffering.........Life comes out of death. Will India rise out of her slavery without fulfilling the eternal law of purification through suffering . . . Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone by the sufferer. The purer the suffering the greater is the progress. Hence did the sacrifice of Jesus suffice to free a sorrowing world".

"We must refuse to wait for the wrong to be righted till the wrong-doer has been roused to a sense of his inequity. We must not have fear of ourselves or others having to suffer and remain participators in it. But we must combat the wrong by ceasing to

assist the wrong-doer directly or indirectly . . . If a Government does a great injustice the subjects must withdraw co-operation wholly or partially sufficient to wean the ruler from his wickedness".

Evidently there were two ways by which Mr. Gandhi thought of bending the Government through the weapon of non-co-operation. Firstly, he thought that Government would indeed come to a standstill if his full programme of non-co-operation was adopted on a large scale by the political intelligentsia and the masses of the people—who were not, however, given any effective political programme to pursue, while title-holders and Government servants would never be persuaded in any large numbers to respond to Mr. Gandhi's appeal. Secondly, therefore, Mr. Gandhi hoped that even if Government was not paralysed it would eventually be persuaded to negotiate with him, after the people had suffered in the later stages of non-co-operation. He, therefore, really relied—as he does rely even at the present day—on effecting a "change of heart" by a kind of spiritual telepathy on the British Rulers. But this anyhow did not look like politics, whatever its spiritual qualities might be, and so not likely to draw large masses of the people to this movement. Besides Mr. Gandhi, in the earlier stages, spoke more of non-co-operation as almost a religious duty to dissociate from the sinful Government, than as a weapon for paralysing its whole machinery. So it all looked so different from the programme of direct action of breaking laws in 1919 to compel the Government to withdraw the Rowlatt Act, and did not succeed in evoking the spontaneous enthusiasm of the mass following even in the course of many months, as the previous movement effected in the course of a few weeks.

Nor did we leave Mr. Gandhi unacquainted with our doubts and difficulties in the matter. It was during June 1920, I think, that I invited some of the leading workers of all the districts of Gujarat to meet Mr. Gandhi at his Ashram to discuss the Khilafat question and the political programme that he had placed before the country. All the leading spirits of the Home Rule League, the Kaira struggle and the previous *Satyagraha* campaign of 1919 gathered together to listen to Mr. Gandhi on his new Movement. I acted as their spokesman, and argued with Mr. Gahdhi on the international problem of the Arab independence in Arabia and Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine. For

that in our opinion was the chief political content of the Khilafat grievance shorn of all its sacerdotal and superstitious trappings. Mr. Gandhi listened but said little on the purely political question. He firmly clung to the ark of Muslim opinion, which was thoroughly sectarian and superstitious from our point of view. The gathering, therefore, dispersed without coming to any conclusion. And eventually all my friends who constituted, so to say, Mr. Gandhi's old guard in the Province, told me; "we do not understand all these complicated questions, and we are not convinced about the non-co-operation Movement. Tell us, however, when you think it right to plunge into it, and we shall then do everything in our power to make the Movement a glowing success".

While many of my colleagues, however, were free to keep to their doubts and opinions, I was really chained to Mr. Gandhi as the sub-editor of our weekly NAVAJIVAN. As he then mostly wrote in English for YOUNG INDIA I was committed to the unenviable task of translating his propagandist articles on the Khilafat question and on the programme of non-co-operation in which I could not believe. A sense of rage and rebellion gradually accumulated in my heart during these months. At last I could not contain myself any longer. I approached Mr. Gandhi during June 1920, and after unburdening my heart of all my irrepressible doubts and difficulties on the cause that he had espoused and the Movement that he was about to start, I respectfully tendered my resignation of my sub-editorship. It was painfull for me, indeed, not only to sever my connection with a paper which I had first started about five years ago, and on which I had worked under Mr. Gandhi for one year, but also to rebel against the dogmas and discipline of the great leader whom I had so devotedly and energetically followed for nearly three years. Mr. Gandhi tried to argue, of course, with his usual parental affection, and loving persuasiveness. I, however, remained unconvinced, and I finally took leave of my beloved paper towards the end of June 1920, and practically cut myself off altogether from all propagandist and organisational association with Mr. Gandhi.

XXVII

GUJARAT BURNS ITS BOATS.

THE month of July saw a new turn in the political tide. Under the heading "I shall not stand for election," Lala Lajpat Rai wrote an article in his Urdu Paper BANDE MATARAM in the first week of July 1920, in the course of which, after pointing out how the Punjab wrong was condoned by Government, he strongly urged the boycott of Legislative Councils in the following terms:—

"These new Councils can only prove beneficial to us when and if the Indian and official members work in amity and concord and together solve problems of State by mutual consultation. Yet in the present circumstance of the Punjab, there is no prospect of the fruition of this hope. If the CIVIL AND MILITARY GAZETTE correctly represent the views of Punjab officials (Europeans), then I have no hesitation in saying that the time has not yet come for Indians and Europeans to work together for the good of the country. I heartily desire that the time should soon come but to say that the time has come is to shut our eyes to facts. Until now they are the Rulers, and we are the ruled. The Punjab Publicity Committee which has the confidence of the Government also shows the same thing. As long as that relation continues, it is very difficult for us to work together. They suspect us, and we suspect them. In my view, therefore, I cannot be useful to my country from inside the Council, and it is better, therefore, that I should not go into it".

Thus Mr. Lajpat Rai exhorted the country to boycott all legislatures for the first time. on the ground of the Punjab atrocities, which had been so graphically described with such horrifying details in the Gandhi Committee's Report. This appeal, coming as it did from one of the oldest and staunchest political fighters of the country, went straight to my heart. For the first time we saw a real political plan based on the real grievances of the Punjab. All the officialdom of the Punjab, and in fact the whole of India, appeared in my eyes armed as it were with whips and revolvers, rifles and bayonets, ready again to flog, wound and kill hundreds and thousands

of innocent men and women, as they had done only last year in the Punjab. Their hands, indeed, appeared to us yet stained with blood, which they had not yet washed by the smallest act of repentance. How could we then meet and shake hands with these brutal representatives of a sinful and unrepentant bureaucracy in the Council Chambers of India, and to what purpose could we co-operate with the hardy and insolent champions of organised and scientific violence for the good of the country ?

The popular boycott of these Councils would not, of course, destroy them. But it would certainly reduce them to a farcical puppet show, which would be thoroughly shorn of all moral prestige in the eyes of the people. This indeed appeared to be a novel method of attacking the new constitution to which our minds had never been reconciled in spite of the ambigious Resolution of the Amritsar Congress. Mr. Lajpat Rai's boycott thus gave us a weapon to hit straight at the very centre of the hated reforms, and fired with the frenzy of revenging ourselves of the Punjab atrocities, we roused ourselves from our apathy and plunged into this campaign against the Councils which were to be elected within a few months for the first time under the new Reforms Act of 1919.

Quick to discern the slightest turn in the political current, Mr. Gandhi hastened to seize on Mr. Lajpat Rai's boycott of Councils, and to incorporate it straight into the very first stage of the programme of non-co-operation. Lest, however, the accuracy of my analysis be doubted, I will refer in passing to an article published by Mr. Gandhi in YOUNG INDIA under the title "What should the voters do ?" on the 19th June 1920. It will be remembered that the worst about Khilafat and the Punjab had already happened during the month of May—the Khilafat Committee had already adopted the plan of non-co-operation set out by Mr. Gandhi on the 5th May, and the Allahabad Conference had already decided on 3rd June to give an ultimatum to the Viceroy, with a view to inaugurate the campaign of non-co-operation on the 1st August 1920. It will also be recalled that in the first programme outlined by Mr. Gandhi on the 5th May the first stage contemplated was "the giving up of titles and the resignation of honorary posts", and there was no mention of the boycott of Schools, Courts or Councils. And incredible as it might appear, Mr. Gandhi, in the course of the

article referred to above (9th June 1920) —when the great non-co-operation campaign could practically be anticipated as a certainty—far from advocating any boycott of the forthcoming election, asked the voters to select "men of character", after they had satisfied them with replies to the following four questions:

"(1) Do you approve of the present Swadeshi Movement?"

"(2) Do you hold that all the affairs of a Province should be conducted in its vernacular, and that the affairs of the nation should be conducted in Hindustani—a combination of Hindi and Urdu?"

"(3) Do you hold that the present division of the Province of India was made for administrative and political purposes, and that no regard was paid to the people's wishes?"

"(4) Do you hold there is not the remotest likelihood of India's regeneration without Hindu-Muslim unity?"

Thus Mr. Gandhi, while engaged in rousing the country to a feverish pitch of political militancy, not only did not contemplate — except by a mild suggestion in the concluding paragraph — the boycott of Councils, but did not even ask the voters to test candidates according to their convictions or policy on the vexed questions of the Khilafat or the Punjab, or for the matter of that, on any political question at all. It is, moreover, incontrovertible that Mr. Gandhi advocated the boycott of Councils for the first time on the 7th July—(Mr. Lajpat Rai's article had already then been published on the subject). It was again on that very day, that Mr. Gandhi incorporated the boycott of Councils as well as Schools and Courts for the first time in the programme issued on behalf of the Non-co-operation Committee (of the Khilafat Conference).

Mr. Gandhi thus once again succeeded in killing two birds with one stone. He joined up the Punjab with the Khilafat issue as a double plank to serve as a jumping off ground for the non-co-operation Movement. He also secured the hearty support and co-operation of Lajpat Rai and other nationalists all over India, whose hearts were more bitterly grieved over the Punjab than over the

Khilafat question. And secondly, he enriched and amplified his non-co-operation programme, so as to give direct expression to the enraged feelings of the political intelligentsia in the country.

But the boycott of Councils was not the only innovation that Mr. Gandhi introduced in the first stage of the non-co-operation Movement. Comparing the total programme of non-co-operation formulated by him on the 5th May with the details of the first stage of the programme set out by his Non-co-operation Committee on the 7th July, we noticed two other novelties:—The boycott of Courts and the boycott of Schools.

The political workers again were puzzled and confounded over these two boycotts, which hardly appeared to be calculated to worry or embarrass the Government. Let me, however, place before the reader Mr. Gandhi's reasons for recommending these species of boycott which he knew well enough himself would not easily recommend themselves to public opinion. Writing in YOUNG INDIA on the 11th August 1920, he most emphatically urged the boycott of Courts by lawyers in the following terms :

"I submit that national non-co-operation requires suspension of their practice by lawyers. Perhaps no one co-operates with the Government more than lawyers through its law. Lawyers interpret laws to the people and thus support authority. It is for that reason that they are styled Officers of the Court...It may be said that it is the lawyers who have put up the most stubborn fight against the Government. This is no doubt true, but that does not undo the mischief that is inherent in the profession. So, when the nation wishes to paralyse the Government, the profession, if it wishes to help the nation to bend the Government to its will, must suspend practice".

It appeared to us, however, that precisely because lawyers' brains were warped by constitutional jargon and sophitical quibbles—as their self-interest chained them to the position of meditators between the ignorant people and the Government cause—they were least likely to respond to Mr. Gandhi's appeal. But, of course, the plea was also addressed to the large litigant public who were likely to respond in a certain measure to the new call. And yet this item of

the programme did not appear to give any direct or devastating blow to the machinery of the Government of the Law Courts, which would function as merrily as ever before. Here again for want of a clear political argument Mr. Gandhi went on emphasising the urgent necessity of depriving Government of its moral, more than its material foundations, and very often carried the discussions into a nebulous spiritual atmosphere which failed to rouse or inspire the large majority of the workers.

The boycott of schools appeared even more amazing and senseless than the boycott of Courts. Mr. Gandhi urged the boycott of Schools in the same number in YOUNG INDIA (11th August 1920) as follows :—

"For me the whole scheme of non-co-operation is among other things the test of the intensity and extent of our following. Are we prepared to suffer? It has been said that we may not expect much response from title-holders......I make a present of the argument to the objectors, and ask, what about the parents of school children and the grown-up college students? They have no such intimate connection with the Government as the title-holders. Do they or do they not feel enough to enable them to sacrifice the schooling?

Reverting again to the subject, on the 29th September 1920, Mr. Gandhi replied to the objectors as follows:

"I ask myself why some see the truth of the proposition quite clearly, while others, the accepted leaders, condemn it as an error. The answer I have been able to find is that the latter did not consider the present system of Government as an unmixed evil as the former did. In other words, the opponents did not sufficiently realise the significance of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. They did not feel as the others did that these wrongs show conclusively that the sum total of the activity of the present Government is injurious to national growth...I am positive that they will not put their children in a School where there was any likelihood of their being degraded instead of their being elevated. I am equally positive that they would not send their children to a school managed, controlled or even influenced by a robber who had robbed them of their possessions ...It is sinful to receive any education

under the control of the present Government, no matter how high its quality may be, even as it would be to take the richest milk when it is tainted with poison".

Thus Mr. Gandhi urged this boycott more on the ground of subjective feelings and his changed view of Government (for the schools had not certainly changed their quality or complexion overnight) than on any grounds of political expediency. Relying on the popular rage against Government policy regarding the Punjab and the Khilafat demands, Mr. Gandhi hastened to test and strengthen the people's capacity for suffering and self-sacrifice. So this double boycott appeared to be more directly designed for the moral training and discipline of the people than for aiming a straight blow at the Government.

It was not, however, difficult for us to follow Mr. Gandhi's mentality in the matter. He had himself quoted with approval Tolstoi's plea for the withdrawal of children from Government controlled schools in a later issue of YOUNG INDIA (10th November 1920), with a view to paralyse the Government. And we had also learned of Mr. Gandhi's fundamental opposition to all Government institutions, including its Councils, Courts and Schools, through his thesis of philosophical anarchism as contained in his book on Indian Home Rule. We gave him full credit for his deep sincerity which he pleaded "Not Guilty" to the charge of "playing a deep game" and "using the present turmoil to foist my fads on India", and "making religious experiments at India's expense". We had no doubt that he would never have urged such a summary boycott of Courts, and specially Schools, if he was not fundamentally convinced of the error of these institutions. Other political leaders and workers, however, not only did not share Mr. Gandhi's original views on the subject, but had time and again expressed the utmost opposition to them. A hue and cry, therefore, arose from every quarter of India against Mr. Gandhi's plan of this double boycott of Schools and Courts, and it then appeared nearly impossible that he would be able to carry the Congress or the large majority of the masses with him in the novel plan that he was seeking to foist on them.

While the issue remained in the balance so far as the Nation was concerned (for the special Session of the Congress was to meet

in September at Calcutta), some of us began to be speedily converted to Mr. Gandhi's new programme during the month of July and August. As I have stated before, the proposed boycott of Councils, mainly on the ground of the Punjab atrocities, sought to express the burning rage and indignation in our hearts. And presently the boycott not only of Councils but of Courts and Schools, far from appearing—as it did at the very inception—a mere issue of emotionalism in theory and negation practice, began to assume a more positive and practical aspect. It was really in the course of private conversations and discussions that Mr. Gandhi unfolded to some of the nearest of his colleagues his full plan of building up constructive national institutions in proportion as the Nation was weaned from the sinful Government institutions. Thus he asked us not to be merely satisfied by weaning voters from the pooling booths, but to mass them in the Congress fold with a view eventually to organise and develop the Congress machinery and its activities as the National Government of the land. When we were again puzzled by his proposed boycott of the Courts, Gandhi practically replied to us in the following terms (YOUNG INDIA, 11th August 1920).

"Moreover, in my scheme, suspension does not mean stagnation. The lawyers are not to suspend practice and enjoy rest. They will be expected to induce their clients to boycott Courts. They will improvise arbitration Courts in order to settle disputes." Moreover, he urged that the lawyers upon temporarily leaving their profession should become whole-time political servants of the Nation instead of being workers only during their recreation hours.

Thus we were led to dream of setting up a chain of national arbitration Courts under the ægis of the Congress during the non-co-operation campaign, even as the Irish Sinn Feiners had done during the last stages of their grim struggle. The Irish parallel in this instance, did not do a little to fire our imagination and to incline us more implicitly to rely on the wisdom of Mr. Gandhi's deep laid plans than we had done before.

So also regarding the boycott of Schools. This question we indeed argued with Mr. Gandhi more than once. And unconvinced by all his brilliant articles regarding the sinfulness of Government institutions, we tried to bring home to his mind the great disaster that would overtake the thousands and hundreds of thousands of

children that might leave schools at his call without knowing what to do next. Mr. Gandhi, however, shrewdly informed us that here again the positive work would be automatically organised to the extent teachers and children left the Government institution. For the Congress would help the same teachers or draft new ones to organise National Schools for the benefit of the children who had been weaned from Government Schools. We were thus persuaded that neither clients nor children would suffer by the boycott of Courts or Schools for the Congress would be readily enabled by the vast amount of popular support behind it to build up hundreds of arbitration Court and thousands of Schools for their benefit and that apart from a few days or weeks of inevitable confusion the measure of success achieved in both these boycotts would be automatically reflected in the creation of parallel non-official institutions. We thus saw that the whole programme of non-co-operation, even in the first stages, was only not conceived in a spirit of emotional negativism, but was really designed to inspire the political workers of the country to build up a system of parallel National Government. Here again Irish parallel served to inspire us, and we girded up our loins during the months of July to cast our lot whole-heartedly with Mr. Gandhi, and to serve as the pioneers of great historic fight that he was about to inaugurate in the beginning of the next month.

Having then converted myself to Mr. Gandhi's faith I hastened to convert my fellow-workers in Gujarat. After informally consulting and persuading some of my best friends I convened a meeting of the Working Committee of the Gujarat Political Conference to discuss and adopt Mr. Gandhi's programme of Non-co-operation. My friend Mr. Banker, came to my rescue. Most of the members of the meeting had already learned their politics with us through Home Rule and Mr. Gandhi's *Satyagraha* Compaigns, and we had little difficulty in persuading the large majority to our point of view The Committee decided whole-heartedly to adopt the entire programme of non-co-operation, and to forward its Resolutions to the forthcoming Section of the Congress as the embodiment of the will and wishes of the people of Gujarat.

We thus took the lead in organising national opinion under the auspices of a purely political body. For it must be remembered that all the agitation had been carried on so far by the Muslim

leaders of the Khilafat Committee, and by Mr. Gandhi on his entire personal responsibility. From the organisational point of view, therefore the position was quite unsatisfactory. Mr. Gandhi himself realised this very soon, and encouraged by the resolution of the Working Committee of our Conference asked us to convene a special public Session of the Gujarat Political Conference by the end of August, so as to enable him to place the considered decision of the people of Gujarat before the special Session of the Congress in the begining of September. This was indeed a tall order. We had hardly a few weeks' time left to us to convene a Conference which generally took at least a few months to organise. Most of my colleagues refused to undertake any responsibility in the matter. Inspired, however, with the zeal of a fresh convert, I rushed headlong into the fray, and promised Mr Gandhi to organise the Conference within the few weeks at our disposal.

Mr. Gandhi himself has summed up the proceedings of this Conference in his autobiographly as follows:

"The Non-co-operation resolution was moved by me at the Gujarat Political Conference that was held (in Ahmedabad) shortly afterwards (in the last week of August). The preliminary contention raised by the opposition was that it was not competent to a Provincial Conference to adopt a resolution in advance of the Congress. As against this I suggested that the restriction could apply only to a backward movement. but as for going forward the subordinate organisations were not only fully competent but were in duty bound to do so if they did not have the necessary grit and confidence. No permission, I argued, was needed to try to enhance the prestige of the parent institution provided one did it at one's own risk. The proposition was then discussed on its merits, the debate being marked by its keenness no less than the atmosphere of 'sweet reasonableness' in which it was conducted. On the ballot being taken the resolution was declared carried by an overwhelming majotity."

Thus in Mr. Gandhi's words Gujarat indeed burnt its boats. But that was not all. As we had stated before, my heart was really set on the positive programme setting up the arbitration courts and natioual schools and colleges. I, therefore, took special interest in the resolution on national education. The educationist member

of Mr. Gandhi's Ashram urged indeed the establishment of a chain of national schools of all grades. I contended, however, that the organisations of these schools could not be effectively carried on unless they were crowned with the coping stone of a National University. The other friends, however, thought my proposal too premature. We had a hot debate on the subject, and eventually I succeeded in carrying my point. So the Resolution on national education authorised the Working Committee of the Conference to start a National University as the chief pivot of the new organisation of National Education to be started in the towns and villages of Gujarat.

The proceedings and the Resolutions of this Conference created a great stir in the land. For a Provincial Conference had almost for the first time forestalled the great Congress itself by stealing a march, as it were, on the parent institution. Mr. Gandhi was supremely happy over the whole affair and the Conference enabled him to carry a contingent of several hundreds of Gujarat delegates to Calcutta, with a view to vote solidly in his favour and to adopt a militant programme of non-co-operation, and to herald the dawn of new period of unprecedented passive rebellion against the mightiest Empire the world has ever seen.

XXVIII

HIDDEN SPRINGS

THUS the political intelligentsia incensed at the Government policy regarding the Khilafat and the Punjab, girded its loins to adopt Mr. Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation mainly on two grounds. Firstly, they thought it possible, in view of Mr. Gandhi's increasing successes,to rouse and organise all classes, communities and the masses of the nation with the programme of non-co-operation, beginning with the renunciation of titles on the one hand, and ending with civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes on the other. Secondly, they were inspired with a passionate desire to threaten the present system of Government with complete paralysis and practical destruction, by weaning an increasing number of the people of India from co operation with and subservience to British Government, and lining them up under the aegis of a parallel Congress Government.

Now, the first idea was quite feasible and proved successful in practice, as we shall presently see. The second, however, failed to materialise. For while we dreamt of the Irish parallel, we forget the fundamental difference between the basis of the two movements. For while the Irish Sinn Feiners organised the Republican Army and military terrorism for the purpose of building up their parallel government, Mr. Gandhi made non-violence the chief lever and the basis of his non-co-operation Movement. Most of the political workers being fresh converts to the principles of non-co-operation, were, of course, likely to forget this differentiating factor in their burning zeal to carry on the new campaign against Government. Not so, however, Mr. Gandhi. He stressed the crucial principle of non-violence with increasing insistence, as the 1st of August approached nearer. While doing and saying everything that was calculated to rouse the anger and fury of the people to the highest pitch, he appealed to them to convert their impassioned zeal into disciplined action. Thus, writing about the observance of the 1st of August—the day on which his ultimatum expired, and which

marked the inauguration of his movement—he after discountenancing all fears of mob violence and the repetition of the bloody riots of 1919, emphasised the double need of organisation and non-violence in the following terms:

"But the greatest thing in this campaign of non-co-operation is to evolve order, discipline, gnd co-operation among the people, co-ordination among the workers. Effective non-co-operation depends upon complete organisation... ...."

"But as I have said before, every citizen does not know how to do so (to non-co-operate) in an orderly manner. Disorderliness comes from anger, orderliness out of intelligent resistance. The first condition, therefore, of real success, is to insure entire absence of violence. Violence done to persons representing the Government or to persons who did not join our ranks, *i. e.*, the supporters of the Government, means in every case retrogression, in our case cessation of non-co-operation and useless waste of innocent lives. Those, therefore, who wish to make non-co-operation a success in the quickest possible time, will consider it their first duty".

Mr. Gandhi, even admitted in the letter he addressed to the Viceroy on the 1st August, that he deliberately diverted the revolutionary fury of the people into peaceful channels, in the following words:

"In European countries condonation of such grievous wrongs as the Khilafat and the Punjab, would have resulted in a bloody revolution of the people . . . . But half of India is too weak to offer violence, and the other half is unwilling to do so. I had, therefore, to suggest the remedy of non-co-operation which enables those who wish to dissociate themselves from the Government, and which, if it is unattended by violence and undertaken in an orderly manner, must compel it to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs committed. But whilst I shall pursue the policy of non-co-operation in so far as I can carry the people with me, I shall not lose hope that you will see your way to do justice. I, therefore, respectfully ask Your Excellency to summon a Conference of the recognised leaders of the people (evidently a sort of Round Table Conference) and in consultation with them find a way that will placate the Muslims, and do reparation to the unhappy Punjab".

So just as he loyally praised the extraordinary merits of the British Constitution (*vide* his letter of ultimatum of 22nd June) even while he was talking from a hundred platforms of destroying the Satanic system of Government, so he promised in his letter to scan with one eye for the smallest gesture of conciliatory kindness from the Viceregal Lodge, while with the other he threatened to direct the passive rebellion of the millions of India.

So, a policy of personal negotiations ending with temporary pacts and settlements was an integral part of Mr. Gandhi's technique of a non-violent war. It escaped us then—though it has now been thoroughly understood in India, and should also have been clear to us from the history of his South African movement.

Then again, his definition of non-violence was much wider than the ordinary connotation of the word. As has been shown before, Mr. Gandhi deemed even the boycott of British goods as a species of violence, and, therefore, opposed it from the time that he set foot in India. It is instructive, however, to note how Mr. Gandhi contrasted the peaceful policy of non-co-operation with the revengeful tactics of the boycott of British goods. Replying to the LEADER of Allahabad he wrote in YOUNG INDIA (March 17) as follows :

"Boycott is a punishment, and is conceived in a vindictive spirit. The idea of boycotting British goods is that although British goods may be better than, say, Japanese, I should not buy the former because I want to revenge myself upon the British Ministers . . . I hold that boycott in such circumstances is a form of violence. Non-co-operation stands on a different footing. If the Government do wrong, I become a participant in its wrong doing by co-operating with it, and thus making it possible for them to do the wrong. **It is my duty not by way of punishment or by way of revenge, but to the end that I may not make myself responsible for the wrong-doing, to withdraw myself from that Government.** Indeed, I should be justified in bringing that Government to a standstill. It is clear to me, therefore, that **Non-co-operation is as different from boycott as an elephant from an ass**".

To sum up, then. While Mr. Gandhi was addressing moving appeals to the people in language reminiscent of the old Khalifs

or the mediaeval Crusaders, he designed to bottle up their fury within restricted channels. Indeed, he has never felt more happy than when he has been privileged to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm. Not, of course, to revenge himself on his adversaries, or even to punish them—still less to really destroy their system. But to organise the people from within into a solid mass and to invite sufferings on them with a view to rid them of fear and cowardice, and eventually to make a picturesque demonstration of their massive but really ineffective opposition to Government before the whole world. And he would do all this with a view to receive finally an invitation from the Viceregal Lodge to negotiate personally with the head of Government and to arrive at a reasonable compromise.

We, however, did not realise this truth in all its fulness. We only knew that he was directing the storm of a nation-wide agitation with a view to bring us full and unqualified success. The political workers, therefore, were inspired to repose in him full and unqualified faith, and to offer untold and unsurpassed sacrifices in the prosecution of this holy campaign. It was to be deemed holy, not only on account of the Khilafat cause, but also because Mr. Gandhi justified the principle of non-co-operation by the religous precepts of Krishna and Muhammed as well as of Christ and Zoroaster. India, therefore, solemnly embarked on a holy and peaceful crusade against the British Government on the 1st August, practically under personal and undivided leadership of the new prophet Mr. Gandhi. How he steered his novel doctrine and programme through the stormy Congress Session of September 1920 will be related in the next chapter.

XXIX

GANDHI SCORES AT CALCUTTA

I TRAVELLED with Mr. Gandhi and his party by the Khilafat Special to Calcutta. Mian Muhammed Chhotani, Ali Brothers. and many other Khilafat and Gujarat workers travelled by the same train. Ours was indeed a triumphal procession. Mr. Gandhi and the delegates were most vociferously cheered, and most sumptuously treated at all the stations where the train halted during day and night. And travelling as it did right across the country, from Bombay at the one end to Calcutta at the other, and seeing the vast volume of enthusiasm that was evoked at the sight and words of Mr. Gandhi, we felt no doubt about the success of our cause and the final decision of the ensuing Congress Session.

Mr. Gandhi drafted his main Resolution for the Congress as the train neared Tatanager. For us it was only a fresh elaboration of the Gujarati Resolution on non-co-operation which had been adopted at the Gujarat Conference. There is no doubt, however, that we took it to be for more militant and political than it eventually proved to be—more especially because Mr. Gandhi had till then not so emphatically stressed the importance of the uuderlying principle of non-violence. We knew indeed that it formed an integral part of the progromme so far as he was concerned, but we somehow relegated it to only a corner of our minds.

But presently Mr. Gandhi set us aright. As he himself states in his autobiography :

"In the original draft the word 'non-violence' had been left out by me. I had handed over the draft to Maulana Shaukat Ali, who was travelling in the same compartment, without noticing the omission. During the night I discovered the error. In the morning I sent Mahadev with a message that the omission should be made good before the draft was sent to the press".

There was, however, another point that Mr. Gandhi had omitted from the Resolution, and which immediately caught the

attention of the most sympathetic critics. In fact, in his eager desire to placate the Muslims and his own Report on the Punjab, Mr. Gandhi forgot to mention the most important Nationalist demand for self-government in the Resolution. So far as I remember, Pandit Motilal was indeed the first leader who insisted on the inclusion of the demand for self-government as far more important even than the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. "I readily accepted the suggestion". writes Mr. Gandhi, "and incorporated the demand for Swaraj in my Resolution". It was indeed as it should be. But this incident, insignificant as it might appear, serves to remind us how Mr. Gandhi from the beginning of his political career in India has always emphasised moral values and particular grievances and forgotten the political and constitutional demands.

Mr. Gandhi further introduced two important novelties in the Resolution that he eventually placed before the open session of the Congress. It will be remembered that the boycott of British goods had been adopted by the Khilafat Conference at the end of 1919 inspite of Mr. Gandhi's formidable opposition. He, therefore, now took the opportunity to water down the original plan by advocating the boycott of all foreign goods. Lest this, however, might prove too vague and impracticable, he advised "adoption of Swadeshi piecegoods on a vast scale, and to meet all requirements of the Nation which could not be made by Indian mills alone," he "advised manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of millions of weavers who had abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement". Thus at one stroke he secured many of his desires, which might otherwise appear quite visionary and self contradictory. In the first place he turned the battery of the Nation's wrath from the boycott of British to the boycott of all foreign goods, with a view to satisfy the qualms of his own conscience. Secondly, he lined up the Congress with the Indian textile industrialists, who could now secure better prices and reap higher profits at the expense of the millions of India's consumers. And thirdly, he succeeded in placing his most reactionary and primitive doctrine of the spinning Wheel in the very forefront of the Congress programme, and also secured the necessary mandate for exploiting the name of the Congress for the infinite uses to which he might like to put it in future.

The removal of "untouchability" of sixty or seventy millions of so-called "depressed" classes was the other new plank that Mr. Gandhi introduced in the non-co-operation programme for the first time at the Calcutta session. "It is easy enough for the Panchama friends to see," he wrote in propagating this Resolution afterward (YOUNG INDIA, 27th October 1920), "that non-co-operation against this evil Government presupposes co-operation against the different sections forming the Indian Nation. The Hindus must realise that if they wish to offer successful non-co-operation against the Government they must make common cause with the Panchamas even as they have made with the Mussulmans. No-co-operation, when it is free from violence, is essentially a movement of intensive self-purification." "Untouchability cannot be given a secondary place on the programme," he wrote again on the 3rd November 1921, "For without the removal of the taint, Swaraj is a meaningless term....I consider the removal of untouchability is a powerful factor in the process of attaining Swaraj, and for that matter also the Khilafat. Impure Hinduism cannot help the process of Islamic purification." "Swaraj is an unthinkable," he wrote yet another time, "without the removal of the sin of untouchability as it is without Hindu-Muslim unity".

The limitations of this section of the programme must, however, be clearly kept in view. As Mr. Gandhi himself put it, he was more keen on the self-purification of the large masses of the Hindus, than on the real uplift of the untouchable classes. And he was more keen on cementing—as if by a magical wand—the hearts of the Hindu and Mussulmans than on really improving the economic and educational conditions of the backward Mohammaden masses. It may be interesting to note in this connection that the late Mr. Gokhale—whom Mr. Gandhi always remember as his political *guru*—placed first the economic betterment, second, educational progress and third, the social equality in his programme for the untouchable classes. Mr. Gandhi, however, did not treat this subject from the objective point of view so dear to Mr. Gokhale's heart but from his own individualistic emotional standpoint. And so the Congress did not commit itself to any programme of starting schools or workshops for the untouchables even though it did resolve to start national schools and colleges with a view to secure the boycott of Government institutions.

Armed then with this Resolution, Mr. Gandhi went to the Subjects' Committee to face the most terrific and formidable opposition that he had perhaps ever faced before in his political career This was really the first Congress Session which he attended with a view to secure the adoption of his own special programme. For he had contended himself at the Amritsar Congress by acting only as an intermediary between the Moderates on the one hand and the Extremists on the other. He had, however, grown a much bigger and a more distinguished leader within the nine months that had passed by. He had already secured the complete allegiance and unquestioning loyalty of most, if not all, the Muslim members of the Subjects' Committee. Moreover, the Khilafat Committee as an organisation, and he and many of his pious or political followers throughout the country, had already inaugurated a campaign of non-co-operation from nearly a month ago. He had also the Resolution of the Gujarat Conference in his pocket. He thus practically faced the Congress with a *fait accompli*, and had already stolen a march over it by his partially organisational but largely personal individual action. He thus cleverly placed the entire Subjects' Committee on the defensive as it were, by putting to it the question—if it and the Congress were not prepared to help the bereaved Mohammedan Community in its dire distress and incidentally to secure justice for the Punjab and Swaraj for the Nation, by adopting the entire programme that he and the Mohammedans had already begun to carry out, and were, moreover, pledged to carry out even in the future—in spite of any verdict that the Congress might choose to give.

He had thus cleverly weighted the dice heavily in his favour. The Subjects' Committee was attended by the full quota of its members. The atmosphere was almost electrical. The Ali Brothers and other Muslim members who came to support Mr. Gandhi, were dressed in loose long robes and red Turkish caps blazoned with crescents. But while most of the non-Mohammedan youngster instinctively ranged themselves on Mr. Gandhi's side almost from the very outest, the ablest politicians and veterans—who had grown gray in the service of the country—were firmly and unequivocally ranged against Mr. Gandhi's view. The whole subject, after it was presented by Mr. Gandhi in a very moderate yet very spirited and able speech, was thrashed out threadbare on

both sides. The debate proved indeed "exhaustive, serious and somewhat stormy". It raged for nearly two or three days. It was and indeed remains the most brilliant discussion that I have ever heard before or since, and the speech that Mr. Gandhi delivered in reply to the entire debate—the thundering hammerstrokes of Mr. C. R. Das, the casuistic arguments of Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, the cautious moderation of Pandit Malaviya, the pompous legalities of Jinnah, the senile exuberance of Mrs. Besant, the wavering militancy of Lala Lajpai Rai and the doubts and difficulties of a host of other able speakers—practically demolished the entire edifice of this able opposition, though it lasted hardly twenty to twenty-five minutes. It remains in my memory as the ablest and the most convincing masterpiece of Mr. Gandhi's oratory. One might almost say that he decided the fate, not only of the Subjects' Committee, but also of the Congress. The Resolution was carried by a solid majority amidst thunderous applause.

The erstwhile leaders and veterans of the Congress were not, however, prepared to stomach this defeat in the Subjects' Committee with equanimity. They were determined to test the issue in the open Congress itself. The same debate was, therefore, staged before the open session, which was attended by about ten thousand delegates—the largest number of delegates that had ever crowded into the Congress *pandal*. Mr. Gandhi was supported by Pandit Motilal, the Ali Brothers, Hakim Ajmal Khan, and some minor Hindu leaders. Most of the lawyers and veterans were on the other side. Mr. Gandhi again rose to the height of the occasion in replying to the entire debate, which lasted for two days. But the issue was never in doubt and when the division was taken Mr. Gandhi's Resolution was carried by a far more overwhelming majority than even in the Subjects' Committee.

It was indeed a personal triumph for Mr. Gandhi. The humble votary and camp follower of the Congress, as he used to call himself before, was promoted at one step to the dictatorship of the Congress. And Mr. Gandhi resolved henceforth to use and exploit the name and prestige of the Congress to further his pet schemes and even his eccentricities and idiosyncracies to the fullest extent

The secrets of his success we will analyse in the next chapter.

XXX

DEFEAT OF DAS.

HOW did Mr. Gandhi succeed in conquering the opposition of the stalwarts and veterans of the Congress against his novel programme of non-co-operation? And why did he succeed in capturing the imagination and firing the enthusiasm of a vast number of political workers and enthusiasts who had gathered there from all parts of India? These are the questions that we must now try to answer.

Let me begin by stating the grounds on which Deshabandhu Das—a brilliant and flourishing lawyer as he then was—who really acted throughout the proceedings as the spearhead of the entire opposition, opposed Mr. Gandhi. Just as Mr. Gandhi embodied within himself the spiritual purity, the ascetism and the gentleness of the Sages of the ancient India, Mr. Das on the other hand, represented the romantic patriotism, the militant enthusiasm and the modern intellectual clarity of modern India. The battle thus raged between the forces of emotional faith of Mr. Gandhi's cult on the one hand, and the intellectual forces of Mr. Das's militancy on the other.

After Mr. Gandhi had stated his case at the Subjects' Committee, Mr. Das heckled him on the following lines. Of course, he agreed that he stood on common ground with Mr. Gandhi on certain points. He and his party were as determined as any other to secure justice for the Khilafat and for the Punjab (he was also a signatory with Mr. Gandhi to the Punjab Report) and above all to wrest the power from the oppressive Britishers so as to render such atrocities impossible in the future. He, therefore, yielded to none in his passionate desire to paralyse, and if possible even to smash the machinery of the Government. Was, however, he pertinently asked, Mr. Gandhi's programme calculated to bring about such a result? Would our boycott of the Councils serve really to wreck them? Shall we not really thus play into the hands of the Government by making it a free gift of parasitical legislatures which could

be made to register its degrees, and whose subservience it could flaunt before the eyes of the civilised world? Then again, how was the boycott of Courts and Schools really relevant to our political fight against an oppressive Government? He and his colleagues were quite prepared to sacrifice their practice at the Courts if they could really help to break the Government by so doing. He thought on the other hand that the entire triple boycott of Courts, Schools and Councils, though perhaps legitimate from the point of view of religious conscience, could not be deemed effective in serving the great political cause they all had at heart. Thus though starting from the same premises and sharing Mr. Gandhi's passion for destroying the Satanic Government, he most spiritedly asked Mr. Gandhi how the means of the triple boycott were at all calculated to fulfil the common political goal?

Mr. Gandhi's separate answers to all these questions have been already summarised before. When put, however, to the necessity of presenting these various items as integral parts of a complete programme, Mr. Gandhi gave a somewhat novel presentation of his political philosophy. In effect, he explained that Councils, Courts and Schools formed indispensable links in the entire chain of Government machinery, which extended from the Viceroy sitting on the cloud-capped hills of Simla down to the pettiest Talati (village revenue clerk), who squeezed a few silver and copper coins from the starving peasants of the smallest village. He was out, he said, to destroy the entire system—or what meant the same thing to him, to remodel the whole structure according to popular will. He, therefore, wanted the millions of the country to purify their hearts and band themselves together in a fearless manner by cutting themselves off as far as possible from all unholy contact with the Satanic Government with a view eventually to enable them to hurl a final attack on the all-powerful enemy by means of the sovereign weapons of civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes. Above all, he emphasised the supreme necessity of the doctrine of Love, Non-violence and Self-secrifice, which alone would enable them, not only to carry out the educational part of the programme including the building up of the Congress organisation, National Arbitration Courts and National Schools and Colleges—but would also release the disciplined forces of the Nation to carry out successfully the last and the most difficult stages of the great passive rebellion.

Now this presentation of Mr. Gandhi's case immediately placed Mr. Das and his colleagues under a series of handicaps. First and foremost, there was the personal factor. The galaxy of even educated men and women who crowded round the Committee table, began to twit Mr. Das and other lawyers on their incapacity or unwillingness to sacrifice their enormous practices at the Law Courts. How could Mr. Das agree to the boycott of Courts, they said, when he was himself making such a fortune at the Courts every day? Though Mr. Das and his compeers had put off their English suits and donned spotless white dhotis and shirts in honour of the occasion, the shrewd Bengali ladies told us "Do not believe in this show of simplicity. It is only meant to show off to Mr. Gandhi, and they will put on their foreign rags and make big money again at the Courts as soon as Mr. Gandhi's back is turned". Mr. Das's and other leading lawyers' opposition, therefore, to the boycott of Courts was greeted with cynical jokes by the back-benchers. And against them sat in striking contrast the thin, emaciated, ascetic figure of Mr. Gandhi, the saint, the prophet and the political mystic, who had long ago renounced his big practice and his wealth in the service of the Nation, and was now about to lead the millions of India in a holy war against the foreign Government. He would succeed if only these pompous and pedantic lawyers would bend themselves humbly to his will, and help him. But would they? Such jibes and jokes, even more than the worth of Mr. Gandhi's argument, blasted the opposition of Mr. Das and his colleagues.

But Mr. Gandhi's programme only began with the triple or five-fold boycott, including that of honorary titles and foreign cloth. It did not end there, however. For the first time in the history of the Congress, Mr. Gandhi placed a programme of direct action. The boycotters themselves connoted practical action. But their value in terms of practical politics could be doubted. Not so, however, the sterling worth of civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes, which formed the last and the most formidable stage of the complete programme of non-co-operation. It has really dawned on many workers, specially since Mr. Gandhi set his foot on Indian soil, that the Congress had all these thirty years and more been loyally submitting petitions and Resolutions to the Government. It had really followed the policy of mendicancy. It had occasionally discussed some lines and policies of action, but all that talk had

really come to nothing. And now for the first time came a man with a complete programme of good practical action, which, in fact, amounted to nothing less than a nation-wide passive rebellion against the might of the British Empire. The action again was to begin now and here. And the man who presented this plan had not only put it to the test and achieved admirable results in South Africa, but had already practised it—on however limited a scale—on the battle-fields of Kaira and Champaran, and during the Rowlatt Act agitation. And the man suggested action; while Messrs. Das and Pal had nothing to offer except another Deputation to the Prime Minister, delay of decision for one more year—in fact, talk, talk and more talk. And as the political workers were enraged at the brutal policy of the Government and could not brook a moment's delay, they had no hesitation in voting for action—however limited and visionary it might be—as against the continuance of the old Congress policy of empty Resolutions and pompous speeches.

But if such action was to be ultimately adopted on an effective and decisive scale, surely the Nation would have to be educated, disciplined and organised for it from now onwards. There was not a moment to lose. But how could the Nation be organised if big politicians imprisoned themselves in the Councils, and if big lawyers continued to make their piles at the Law Courts? How could the youngmen of the country again be immured within the narrow confines of their Schools and Colleges if a holy war was to be effectively prosecuted against the Government? Would they not be of greater service to their Motherland, if, like the youngmen of the belligerent countries during the Great War, they left their Schools to serve as soldiers in their national army under the leadership of their self-sacrificing teachers and others? Thus Mr. Gandhi's programme appeared not only practical but fascinating and heroic in its vast and comprehensive scope, as it sought to line up all the most promising elements of the nation in a united battle against the Satanic Government.

Nay more, Mr. Gandhi claimed that he had incorporated the essence of the old battle cry of the boycott of British goods and widened its scope in his new programme of the boycott of foreign cloth and the re-organisation of the old spinning and weaving indutry of the country. Fight, by all means, he said, against the

inroad of British textiles. But why not against the Japanese and American textiles too? Do you desire to exchange British for Japanese for American domination? For in his opinion we would invite the political mastery of the country whose textiles or other goods were imported on any large scale. And how could we effectually boycott the dumping of foreign cloth unless we produced sufficient to clothe our own people? The immediate installation and multiplication of textile factories being ruled out as utterly impossible nothing remained for the nation except to concentrate on an intensive campaign to re-institute the spinning wheels and the weaving looms that would also serve to feel millions of Indian's starving poor. The spinning wheels, again, in his opinion, besides being an economically beneficent activity, would serve as a nucleus for all Congress activities in the thousands of villages, and would line up the peasants and even the old women working in their cottages with the vast army of town dwellers fighting for the freedom of India.

Mr. Gandhi thus presented a fascinating possibility and a militant experiment. It might fail of its purpose. But even in that case the nation would not lose, but indeed gain in fearlessness and self-confidence. On the other hand, there was always hope of success. And the Congress delegates, sick of the tall talk of the older leaders, decided to give a sporting chance to the new Apostle of non-violent non-co-operation.

Of course, Mr. Gandhi's programme could have been subjected to a fusillade of criticism by any modern economists or sound political revolutionaries. They could have easily used their knowledge of Marxian Socialism and of the history of modern revolutions, to expose the fundamental defects in the whole structure that he had raised in a fit of subjective emotionalism, and individual adventurism. For instance, instead of stressing the various formal links in the machinery of Government, they would have more properly linked up the landlords and the capitalists—who really form the strongest bulwarks of modern capitalist imperialism—with the Government, in order to lead an attack against them for the exploitation of the people. They would also have asked the Congress to proclaim beforehand the inherent rights and the privileges of the peasants and workers of India, with a view to inspire them to range themselves in a solid phalanx under the

leadership of the Congress. For it is undeniable that a glowing vision of better life conditions in the immediate future would serve to stiffen up the back of the toiling millions far more than the wrongs of a superstitious institution like the Khilafat, the past grievances of the distant Punjab, and even the vague dreams of political freedom. Such arguments could be easily elaborated and multiplied. But Mr. Das and his compeers did not stand in this respect on any higher ground than Mr. Gandhi and his Muslim friends. Both were sublimely ignorant of the new diagnosis of economic and political exploitation, and of the new technique of carrying out popular revolutions. Hence nothing could stop Mr. Gandhi from achieving a certain victory, and the inaugurating of his non-violent campaign against the British.

It was, however, destined to be more than a mere political fight. Those who viewed the proceedings of the Calcutta Congress and the currents of political activity released in the country since then, would easily agree that the vast majority of the delegates at the Congress and of the millions who followed him afterwards, were not actuated by mere political motives. It has already been noted that Mr. Gandhi imported a new religious terminology in his propaganda since he espoused the Khilafat cause and the non-co-operation programme. India was not to fight for mere political liberty. It was out to instal nothing less than Ramrajya or Dharamarajya—the Empire of Truth and Love amidst a world torn by military and economic dissensions. And as he proceeded with his vigorous propaganda in this matter, he went on elaborating the various points on which he wished to attack the foreign Government. If he wished, for instance, to fight the modern schools and English education that was being imported therein, it was not merely because they had been set up by foreign oppressors, but also because they constituted "an unmitigated evil" in themselves, and had "emasculated us, constrained our intellect" and thoroughly polluted the pristine purity of our national culture. Arguing once about the supposed advantages of English education derived by men like Mr. Tilak and Rajah Rama Mahan Roy, Mr. Gandhi remarked that they were "so many pigmies. and had no hold upon the people compared with Chaitanya Shanker, Kabir and Nanak." And so he reverted continuously in the course of his discussions and arguments to the heroes of the past and gems of classical

literature. And by the time that the Congress met in Calcutta he had succeeded in creating an atmosphere not only of political revolt but also of moral rebellion against the sins of the modern Satanic civilisation—which the British Government embodied for us in India—and a cultural rebellion against the imposition of foreign art, literature and modes of thought. And he went on idealising either ancient or mediæval India, or creating imaginary pictures of a new order of society such as he had outlined in his book on 'Hind-Swaraj.' It thus came to pass that the Congress, while adopting his non-co-operation programme, insensibly identified itself with a reactionary social philosophy and economic outlook, which loved to hark back to the dead past instead of moulding the inevitable future. And the ten years that have elapsed since then have served to show that while India did benefit in a certain measure by the programme of practical action that Mr. Gandhi outlined at Calcutta, it has paid a heavy price for it by committing itself to religious obscurantism and reactionary puritanism in all questions of social and economic reform, which really lie at the very foundation of all political problems.

XXXI

TRAGEDY OF THE TRIPLE BOYCOTT.

OUR joy and pride were unbounded as we returned again by the Khilafat special to Bombay. We chuckled over the success of our great leader and his great cause, which we had made our own. We indeed congratulated ourselves that we had the courage and the foresight to place ourselves under the banner of Mr. Gandhi, some three or four years before the nation recognised him as its undisputed master. And we also felt jubilant that we in Gujarat had already inaugurated the non-violent War which the Nation as represented at the Congress eventually adopted by a solid majority, after staging such an elaborate discussion in the Committee and in the open Congress.

Our joy, however, was not unmixed with fear. We could not forget that old leaders like Pandit Malaviya, and even younger stalwarts like Deshabandhu Das, while fully approving of Mr. Gandhi's political purpose, had opposed every item of his programme to the very end. Their opposition had, of course, been vanquished by a majority in the Congress. But it was evident that the Movement could not possibly make any substantial headway in the different Provinces of the country unless these very leaders put their hearts and souls in working out the programme that had been decided upon by the Congress against their united opposition. The question, therefore, that troubled us—and I suppose Mr. Gandhi too—was: "Would these leaders laying aside all individual pride and intellectual difference loyally and even cheerfully submit to the will of the nation is expressed at Calcutta, and gird up their loins to march under Mr. Gandhi's banner as brave soldiers of Swaraj? Or would they continue their opposition within the ranks of the Congress and seek to convert the majority to their view at the ensuing Annual Session of the Congress to be held at Nagpur at the end of December."

But hardly a few days had elapsed before Das and other leaders of the opposing minority sprang a most agreeable surprise

on the Nation by setting a striking example of their sense of patriotism and of their devotion to the Congress. Though Pandit Motilal Nehru remained the only important leader who had been completely converted to Mr. Gandhi's new programme at Calcutta, even to the point of deciding to renounce his magnificent practice at the Bar, and Lala Lajpat Rai had already decided on the boycott of Councils months before the Congress met, Mr. Das was perhaps the first of the opposing leaders to take the initial plunge into the non-co-operation movement in obedience to the Congress mandate. He and his followers in Bengal lost no time in issuing a manifesto renouncing their express desire to stand for election to the Councils, and calling upon all voters to boycott the ensuing election for the Provincial and Indian Legislatures. Other dissenting leaders like Mr. V. J. Patel and Mr. Jayakar in Bombay, Mr. Srinivas Iyengar in Madras, Mr. Kelker in Poona, Dr. Moonje in Nagpur and a host of others followed up the lead of Mr. Das in rapid succession. The movement, therefore, for the complete boycott of elections which were to be held within a few weeks, gained a tremendous momentum in the country from end to end. The younger political workers and the masses again were greatly delighted to see these great stalwarts bending themselves to the discipline of the Congress and Mr. Gandhi, with a view to present a united front against the mighty forces of Government. Thousands of meetings and demonstrations were held throughout the country to convey the message of the Congress to the people, and though most of the dissenting leaders tried to confine their advice to the boycott of Legislatures, the masses of the people could not possibly be restrained from waxing enthusiastic over the entire programme which Mr. Gandhi was preaching from a host of papers and many more platforms in the course of his whirlwind campaign throughout the land.

The election day saw the complete success of the Congress propaganda in the matter. No Congressmen stood as candidates for the elections. Only some Moderate politicians, landlords and other men generally ranged on Government side, offered themselves for election. The Congress workers had not only asked the electors to boycott the elections completely, but to do so in a thoroughly peaceful manner. They had been asked generally to keep to their houses and not even to resort to picketing at the polling booths.

The elections itself, therefore, in all parts of the country passed off quite peacefully. As the Government figures themselves presently proved, the overwhelming majority of the voters did not vote, and the Moderates and other candidates who were therefore elected to the Legislatures were conclusively proved to be thoroughly unrepresentative of the mass of the voters. As Mr. Gandhi rightly stated in YOUNG INDIA (24th November 1920):

"The Elections in the Bombay Presidency and elsewhere have demonstrated the success of non-co-operation about Councils in so far as the voters are concerned. In some cases not a single voter seems to have registered his vote. What will the so-called representatives do? . . . The electors have shown in no uncertain terms that they do not want to have anything to do with the Reform Councils. The members will reduce representative institutions to an absurdity if they persist in coming to the Council when they have the clearest possible mandate to the contrary".

While the programme of boycott of Councils had appealed to the political instinct of the large majority of the workers, they had on the other hand hardly been touched by Mr. Gandhi's unrivalled propaganda for the boycott of educational institutions. Then again Mr. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders of the Calcutta opposition did not so quickly or so easily surrender to the Congress mandate on the boycott of Schools and Colleges as they so patriolically did on the question of boycott of Councils. Unassisted, therefore, by any first-rate leaders in the country, Mr. Gandhi had only to rely on the support of the Ali Brothers and the increasing Congress following and mass enthusiasm to carry out this item of the programme. Though he fought long and arduously, his very first reverses left us in no doubt that the educational item would remain one of the weakest links in the chain of the non-co-operation Movement. Indeed, Mr. Gandhi exercised considerable ingenuity and resourcefulness in the elaboration of this part of the programme. He sought to attack the educational machinery of the Government on as many fronts as possible. He began by asking the parents to withdraw the children from Government controlled and Government-financed Schools and Colleges. He very soon, however, sought to enhance the pace of the boycott by addressing direct appeal to all boys and girls over sixteen to with-draw of their own initiative from all such Government-ridden

institutions irrespective of the wishes of their parents. Such appeals. of course, evoked some mild and some vehement protests from many enlightened parents. But all their appeals based upon the sacred rights of parenthood and family discipline hardly succeeded in moving Mr. Gandhi from the path of direct appeal to the youth who were asked even in the name of the sacred examples of Indian religious history and mythology to risk their parents' anger in following the straight path of non-co-operation. And though the actual figures of practical non-co-operation were not encouraging, Mr. Gandhi's new policy enabled the Congress workers to hold innumerable meetings of the youths throughout the country, and to instil into their hearts the novel doctrine of passive rebellion that had been adopted by the great assembly of the nation.

Presently, however, Mr. Gandhi decided on another line of campaign. As most of the Secondary Schools and even several Colleges were being conducted by private bodies, he decided to appeal to them in the name of the Congress to sacrifice Government grants and renounce Government control and even affiliation with the official Universities. Nay more, he even started a movement with a view to "nationalise" such great centres of Muslim and Hindu learning as the M. A. O. College of Aligarh and the Benares Hindu University.

The intensive propaganda that Mr. Gandhi then started on the subject, and the innumerable meetings of School and College students that were held everywhere, undoubtedly succeeded in creating a mentality of political revolt in the youth of the country. Though only a few students were persuaded to boycott Government institutions. Mr. Gandhi undoubtedly succeeded in setting an excellent example before the whole of India by the nationalisation of a good number of Secondary Schools in his home town of Ahmedabad and in the whole Province of Gujarat. The Proprietory School of Ahmedabad took indeed a glorious lead in the matter. Other towns and schools followed National schools were also started in some big towns and even small villages, and arrangements were being rapidly speeded up with a view to start national colleges and universities in Gujarat and elsewhere.

With his love for the dramatic and the sensational Mr. Gandhi, in consultation with the Ali Brothers, decided to launch an intensive campaign for nationalising the Aligarh College. Accompanied by Maulana Mahomed Ali, who returned from Europe in the first week of October, Mr. Gandhi visited Aligarh on the 12th October, and addressed a monster meeting of the students and professors of the College, with a view to persuade them to renounce Government grant and control. He then proceeded to address an open letter to the Trustees of the College, who were also requested by some of their Non-co-operating leaders to nationalise the institution.

It is instructive to read how Mr. Gandhi summarises his activities and arguments in this connection in the course of an article published in YOUNG INDIA of 27th October 1920. After paying a handsome compliment to the traditions of the forty-five year old institution, he writes:

"It is the best known centre of Islamic culture in India. Why do I seek to destroy it ? Some Mohammedans really think that I mean ill under the pretence of wishing well to Aligarh. Little do they know that I am imploring Panditji (Malaviya) to do to the Hindu University what I am asking the Trustees to do to Aligarh. And I am certainly going to plead with the Benares students as earnestly as I have with Aligarh boys. I have done the same with the Khalsa College. The latter is the only centre of Sikh culture.

"I do desire passionately to destory all these three institutions as they are, and would strive to raise purer and truer ones instead.

"I deny that these institutions are in any way true representatives of their respective cultures. In as much as Islam is in peril, in English hands Hinduism and Sikhism are also in peril.........

"With the knowledge we have of British intentions it is unmanly, un-Indian for us to accept even a portion of our own money through hands stained with the blood of the innocents of Jallianwalla . .. ... This Government has robbed us of our honour and put one of our religions in peril. In my humble opinion, it is a sin for the nation to receive education in Schools financed by or under the influence of the control of the Government".

The Trustees of the Aligarh College, however, met on the 17th. October, 1920 and decided to carry on the institutions on the old lines The National Muslim University was, however, inaugurated with Maulana Mahomed Ali as its Principal on the 29th October, to train and educate the few students who left the old institution under the influence of the new movement. Similarly, though Mr. Gandhi's visit to the Punjab created a great stir among the students and resulted in wholesale strikes in many colleges, he failed to induce a single authority to nationalise its institution. Again, Mr. Gandhi's speeches and propaganda at Benares succeeded in evoking a temporary strike among the students of the Hindu University. But Pandit Malaviya and other official leaders of the institution refused to sacrifice their work of a whole life-time to the temporary emergencies of a political movement. There were similar temporary strikes of students in many schools and colleges all over the country, and so far as I know Mr. Gandhi's efforts to nationalise any of the existing colleges met with universal failure.

Meeting thus with a dead wall of opposition on this path, Mr. Gandhi decided to devote all his energies to the creation of new schools, colleges and universities. So the National College and the Gujarat National University were inaugurated by him on the 15th November. He was duly appointed first Chancellor of the University. Professor Gidwani, who had just resigned his post at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, was appointed Principal of the National College, which started with about three hundred students. Similarly, a National College was started at Patna under the advice of Mr. Gandhi, on the 5th January, 1921. Again, all efforts for securing the nationalisation of the Fergusson and New Poona Colleges at Poona having completely failed, the Tilak Mahavidyalaya (National College) was started at Poona on 11th December. Thus Mr. Gandhi really sought to disguise his signal failure in securing nationalisation of schools and colleges on any large scale, by starting comparatively small and stunted national schools, colleges and universities.

He succeeded even less with lawyers and title holders Indeed, quite a fair number of young and even elderly lawyers did leave their practice at the call of the Congress and became whole-time national workers. But they were more an exception than the rule,

Still less did the litigants boycott the Courts. Only a microscopic minority of title holders renounced their titles. The Congress propaganda was, however, loudly proclaimed to have succeeded in undermining—as it did but only temporarily—the moral value of the Councils, Courts, Schools and Titles and the end of December again saw thousands of delegates rushing to Nagpur to attend the Annual Session of the Congress, and waiting to see if the leaders of the opposition at Calcutta were prepared to line up with the majority in leading an intensive campaign of violent rebellion against the Government.

XXXII

NATIONAL UNITY AT NAGPUR

OUR team of Gujarat workers was more or less in a holiday mood as they started in a special from Ahmedabad—others joining in at different stations up to Surat and Bardoli—to attend the Annual Congress Session at Nagpur. Our success had been already decided at Calcutta, and the veritable storm of popular enthusiasm that Mr. Gandhi's propaganda evoked throughout the country, and even the practical success that he achieved during the short period, convinced us that Nagpur Congress could not but bear down any opposition that might be led Mr. Das's party by an even more overwhelming majority than was secured at the Calcutta Session. Confident, therefore, of the verdict of the Congress we gave ourselves up to joy and mirth in the train, and paraded the platforms at nearly every station, shouting national slogans and singing national songs. We were fed and feasted during our journey as never before—and perhaps never since. We also played a lot of pranks with the railway authorities, and convinced ourselves for the first time of the success of organised and lively resistance even in such trivial matters, And so we reached Nagpur. and found ourselves in the midst of a veritable seething mass of humanity that had collected from all parts of the country to attend this most extraordinary Annual Session of the Congress.

It was for the first time, I think, at Nagpur, that a veritable city was built for the accommodation of the Congress delegates. Uptill then, the few thousand delegates had always been accommodated in different private and public buildings in the cities where Congress had been held. The number of delegates, however. this time exceeded fifteen thousand, and such a comparatively small city as Nagpur could not possibly accommodate such a vast number within its comparatively few buildings. Then again, Mr. Gandhi really wanted the Congress delegates not to live any more as rich Nabobs—as they in his opinion used to live before when

they came to their yearly Congress pilgrimage—but to live a congregate life of simple poverty, if only as an indication of the new spirit of suffering and sacrifice which was embodied in the Congress Resolution of non-co-operation. The new city, therefore, really consisted of small temporary huts made of thatched leaves and grass in a vast open compound. Suitable provision was, of course, made for water and light. Even so, living in such simple huts and sleeping on shaky cots—which often gave way during the night—was indeed a novel experience for most of the delegates. Not a few complaints were made and groups of delegates were often found shouting and clamouring against the inconveniences of living in such sparsely covered huts exposed to the biting cold of Central India.

As we settled down in our new surroundings—some of us were accommodated in a colony of small but solid houses—we began to hear ugly rumours of an invasion planned by the Deccan and specially by the Bengal delegates. It was whispered in our ears that Mr. Das, at any rate, was bringing a large contingent from Calcutta, with a view to swamp Mr. Gandhi's majority and to reverse the Calcutta decision. We knew, of course, that Bengal and the Bombay Deccan had remained solidly united in its doctrinal opposition to the bulk of the non-co-operation programme, even though their leaders had gracefully lined up with Mr. Gandhi's majority in proclaiming the boycott of the Councils. These Provinces again had continued to remain practically impervious to all propaganda for the boycott of Schools and Courts. The fears, therefore, appeared to be justified. Mr. Das and other leaders came in due course with their camp followers. We then heard that private consultations were proceeding between Mr. Gandhi on the one hand and Mr. Das and Lala Lajapat Rai and other members of the opposition on the other, with a view to arrive at a united decision. The issue, however, remained uncertain for the large majority of the on-lookers, till the Subjects' Committee met to consider Mr. Gandhi's Resolution on non-co-operation.

The proceedings in the Subjects' Committee, however, offered us a most agreeable surprise almost at the very outset. For after Mr. Gandhi had proposed his Resolution which was drafted more or less on the Calcutta lines, Mr. Das, instead of fighting it tooth and nail as he had done at Calcutta, proclaimed his willing

conversion to Mr. Gandhi's view by suggesting only a few verba amendments in some sections of the Resolution. The suggestions of Mr. Das were, of course, denounced as "pompous pedantry of undigested legal learning," by Mr. Jitendra Lal Banerji. For he was one of the first Bengal workers who had joined Mr. Gandhi at Calcutta, and was, therefore, justifiably impatient of any criticism in which Mr. Das indulged only with a view, as it were, to save his face. But Mr. Gandhi, on the other hand, far from being the fiery propagandist of Calcutta, proved himself to be the veritable embodiment of sweet reasonableness and accommodating diplomacy. He, therefore, agreed to amend his Resolution in compliance with the suggestions of Mr. Das, Lalaji and others. The Resolutions were then passed unanimously in the Subjects' Committee. And when Mr. Das himself as the spearhead of the Calcutta opposition seconded Mr. Gandhi's Resolution in the open session in a brief but moving speech, and practically expressed his heroic Resolution to sacrifice his munificent practice at the Bar, the whole Congress rose as one man and gave itself up to a tumult of joy in collaboration of the unanimous adoption of the non-co-operation programme.

Few then understood the real nature and extent of the conversion of Mr. Das and his followers. Their shrewd and as tute minds were not indeed really converted to Mr. Gandhi's view. Nothing that had happened in the country, nothing new that Mr. Gandhi had stated, had induced them to believe in the intrinsic value of the boycott of Schools and Courts as the panacea of India's ills. In supporting, therefore, Mr. Gandhi's Resolution they really proclaimed their emotional more than their intellectual conversion. While their minds suspended all doubts on the subject, their hearts willingly and loyally submitted to the rising tide of national feeling. After all, they thought nothing would be lost, and perhaps much could be gained by giving Mr. Gandhi a free hand and loyal assistance in working out a most unusual programme on which he had so firmly set his heart. So, it was more a suspension of their opposition than its complete eradication as we shall see later. This intellectual opposition was destined to raise up its head again even against the great Gandhi himself, when Mr. Das founded the Swaraj Party in 1923 and struck to his guns against the dictatorial efforts of Mr. Gandhi himself, after he was released from jail in 1924.

While the Resolution of non-co-operation was adopted in the Subjects' Committee after only a brief and formal discussion, two other subjects of sovereign importance came in for a warmer and longer debate in the Committee. One was Foreign Propaganda, the other was Congress Constitution. And the Nagpur Congress. while following in the footsteps of Calcutta on the General policy of non-co-operation, marked indeed a new epoch in the political history of the country by deciding to shut down all propaganda of committees and papers specially in England, and by adopting a new full-fledged and practical constitution which Mr. Gandhi himself drafted as a Member of the Committee appointed at the Amritsar Congress.

Much need not be said to-day about the decision regarding Foreign Propaganda. The subject was more hotly debated than it perhaps might have been otherwise on account of the presence of Commander Wedgwood, Mr. Holford Knight and Mr. Ben Spoor at the Nagpur Congress. All these three stalwarts argued most eloquently in favour of Congress support for carrying on the British Committee and conducting the paper in London on behalf of the Indian Congress. And Mr. Gandhi indeed waxed eloquently in replying to them. His main plea was that India should rely neither on the British Government nor on the British people, or any foreign people, for the attainment of its freedom. We must, he said, concentrate all our energies on organising and disciplining the nation with a view to generate an irresistible force before which the mightiest empire must bend its knees. All suggestions, therefore, Foreign Propaganda would, in his opinion, only serve to divert attention from the sovereign task of generating intensive energy in the heart of the Nation. The Indian people must decide to sink all their energies within themselves, and not look about in vague hopes to other people if they are to save their souls. While Maulana Mahomed Ali and some others expressed entire agreement with Mr. Gandhi, some others like Mr. Das, though holding a somewhat different view, ridiculed the idea of spending a paltry sum of three thousand rupees—as had been done in the previous year on Foreign Propaganda. Eventually Mr. Gandhi's Resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, to the great chagrin and discomfiture, of course, of our British guests.

The old Congress Constitution was radically altered. In fact, Mr. Gandhi's draft of a brand new constitution was practically adopted as amended by the Subjects' Committee.

"The question of the (new) goal of the Congress," writes Mr. Gandhi in his autobiography, "formed a subject for keen discussion. In the constitution that I had presented the goal of the Congress was the attainment of Swaraj, within the British Empire if possible, and without, if necessary. A party in the Congress wanted to limit the goal to Swaraj within the British Empire only. Its view-point was put forth by Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah. But they were not able to get many votes. Again, the Draft Constitution provided that the means for the attainment were to be peaceful and legitimate. This condition, too, came in for opposition, it being contended that there should be no restriction upon the means to be adopted. But the Congress adopted the original draft after an instructive and frank discussion".

It will thus be seen that Mr. Gandhi felt thoroughly satisfied with the adoption of an ambiguous goal of India's political destiny. While the original object of securing Self-government within the Empire appeared too narrow to him, he evidently could not make up his mind—and it will appear as if he has not yet made it up—on the more correct and logical goal of complete independence for India outside the tentacles of the British Empire—or Commonwealth. Similarly, on the question of means, he succeeded in deleting the original word "constitutional" but defined it afresh so as to shut out everything carrying the least suggestion of violence.

It may be also noted that it was really through the firm and unswerving insistence of Mr. Gandhi that the new Constitution, while permitting the establishment of Congress Committe within the limits of Indian States, placed an effectual bar against even the consideration of the internal affairs of these States. He thus opened the doors of the Congress to the Indian States Subjects, but prevented them from making any use of their new privilege for redressing their wrongs. And Mr. Gandhi had recently the temerity to gloat over this bar sinister as a distinguished service that the Congress had rendered to the "Noble Princes" of India.

The question of the number of Congress delegates was also hotly debated in the Subjects' Committee. "In my draft," writes Mr. Gandhi, "the number of delegates had been fixed, I think, at fifteen hundred; the Subjects' Committee substituted in its place the figure 6,000. In my opinion, this increase was the result of hasty judgment, and experience of all these years has only confirmed me in my view.........Fifteen hundred delegates, jealous of the interests of the people, broadminded and truthful, would any day be a better safeguard for democracy than six thousand irresponsible men chosen anyhow". Why the fifteen hundred delegates chosen exactly as the six thousand elected to-day should be more jealous of the interests of the people and more broad-minded and truthful, is left unsaid.

The new All-India Congress Committee was also to serve as the Subjects' Committee of each ensuing Session of the Congress. Mr. Gandhi thus obviated all difficulties in the matter of the election of Subjects' Committees in the heat and storm of the Congress Session. And finally he super-imposed a small Cabinet, called the Working Committee, which would be empowered to carry out the decisions of the Congress and even to decide on all questions of emergency. How this new constitution, which in Mr. Gandhi's own opinion should have been broad enough to accommodate even men of moderate views, has helped, with the aid of a series of Congress Resolutions, to set up a veritable cast-iron bureaucracy, will be shown hereafter.

The Nagpur Congress thus brought the whole of India to Mr. Gandhi's feet. All differences were hushed or conquered. Congress had now got a new constitutional machinery which could be immediately worked for carrying out the complete programme of non-co-operation. The Nation was bubbling with energy and enthusiasm, as it never was before. Mr. Gandhi had set the limit of one year for the achievement of Swaraj if, of course, the nation fulfilled his conditions. Thus inspired with a new goal, a new technique of war and a new organisation, the Nation set out to win liberty under the lead of "the greatest man in the world".

XXXIII

SWARAJ IN ONE YEAR.

THUS the Nagpur Congress sounded the bugles of non-violent war against the British Government. The Congress, as the representative of the nation, had now unanimously pledged its love and loyalty to Mahatma Gandhi who was virually appointed as the Commander in Chief of the national forces. The tallest and the biggest of his erstwhile critics and opponents had now willingly agreed to act at his valient lieutenants, And the new constitution had laid down the plan of mobilising and organising the entire country into well disciplined companies and battalions to fight the great battle.

The entire programme of non-co-operation appeared perfectly rational and practical to us. Now that it would get us Swaraj immediately, but it would speed the country towards the great goal. It would have been easy indeed to lay before the country an immediate plan of civil disobedience—as Mr Gandhi had in 1919 given it its first lessons in *Satyagraha*—or of non-payment of taxes. But it was well understood that the triple boycott enunciated by Mr. Gandhi and adopted by the Congress would help to mobilise most effectively the most vital political forces in the country. The boycott of Councils had compelled the large majority of political workers to direct their whole attention on the organisation of the national army. Similarly, the boycott of Law Courts served to convert a brilliant minority—however small of lawyer-politicians—into whole-time workers and soldiers of the nation. And the boycott of schools and colleges again helped to harness the young minds' vivid imaginations and burning hearts of the youth of the country and mobilise them as new recruits in the army of Swaraj. Thus, although the triple boycott had not served to destroy the Councils or the Courts, or to nationalise the existing schools, colleges and universities in any appreciable numbers, they all appeared to help in releasing a vast and incalculable amount of militant energy that might prove effective in

breaking the walls and fortresses of the very greatest Empire in the world.

Never, indeed, had Mr. Gandhi reached a loftier pinnacle of power and greatness. In South Africa he was only the leader of a comparatively small and insignificant minority composed of some merchants and clerks and many coolies. In India, the *Satyagraha* campaign of 1919 was indeed the first that he started on a national scale. But as he himself deemed it an experimental measure he sought the approval of the Congress. And now at the beginning of 1921—only seven years after he set foot on India soil—he had not only succeeded by dint of brilliant propaganda, consummate tact, burning patriotism and above all his matchless weapon of direct action, in securing the unanimous approval of the Congress for his novel technique of political warfare, but he was by common consent appointed the Field Marshal of the national forces.

All these years he had studied and thought and dreamt. He had transplanted the potent seed of *Satyagraha* from South Africa to India and sown it in an ever-widening area. He had watched and tended and nursed the plant and was immeasurably pleased to see it bloom and grow in the new soil. The leaders and the workers, students and peasants, men and women and money were at his disposal. He had to give the word and the nation would follow him to victory.

It is, therefore, unspeakably tragic to see how Mr. Gandhi after having reached, as it were, the very summit of his ambitions, and after having placed himself at the head of the national army, stumbled at the very first steps that he took. It would appear as if the same mishap overtook him—and the nation—as it did in 1919. As he has himself confessed, he found himself without a definite plan and programme two years ago. And though he had himself laid down a clear-cut programme, this time, for mobilising the nation and for leading a direct attack on the enemy lines, a strange fate seemed to dog his first steps. Hypnotised as it were by strange dreams and pious slogans he either lost his head in the clouds of subjective idealism or surrendered his wits to the pettiest details of primitive materialism. And it will be my painful duty henceforth to show how, instead of keeping to the straight rational course of initial preparation and organisation to be followed by a

straight attack on the ranks of the enemy, he used all his fertile resourcefulness and matchless powers in devising new slogans and formulas almost every day, and of damming, repressing and diverting the vast Ganges of national forces into fruitless and empty channels.

'Swaraj in on one day', was the first slogan that he most fervently pressed in his service from the beginning of 1921. Of course, he launched it into currency first at the Calcutta Congress in September 1920. But the hopeless division in the Congress ranks—with all the great stalwarts pitted against him—naturally prevented it from becoming a current coin then. And though he measured the year of effort from Septembor 1920 in the initial stages, he eventually shifted it by imperceptible stages to the whole year of Congress, 1921. This year, therefore, was to be deemed the year of Holy War and Swaraj was to be achieved somehow before the 31st December, 1921.

Of course, Mr. Gandhi, from the very outset, made this promise of Swaraj conditional on the fulfilment of certain national pledges. It is piteous, however, to see how he shifted his ground even in the enunciation of these conditions, and even in the very definition of Swaraj itself. After alluding to "much laughter indulged in" by many critics at this new slogan, Mr. Gandhi, writing in YOUNG INDIA (22nd September, 1920), emphatically declared:

"But I frankly confess that until the three conditions (boycott of Councils, Courts and Schools) mentioned by me are fulfilled, there is no Swaraj. We may not go on taking our college degrees, taking thousands of rupees monthly from clients for cases which can be finished in five minutes, and taking the keenest delight in wasting national time on the Council floor, and still expect to gain national self-respect".

"The last, though not the least, important part of the Maya still remains to be considered. That is Swadeshi .....If we could get rid of the economic slavery we must manufacture our own cloth, and at the present moment only by hand-spinning and hand-weaving".

"And this means discipline, self-denial self-sacrifice, organising ability, confidence and courage".

And yet writing only after five months (in YOUNG INDIA 23rd February, 1921) he, after expressing the utmost satisfaction over these "five months' experience", revised these conditions of obtaining Swaraj in the following terms:

"Let us then rivet our attention on:

1. Culivating the spirit of non-violence.
2. Setting up Congress organisation in every village.
3. Introducing the Spinning Wheel in every home and manufacturiug all the cloth required for our wants through the village weaver.
4. Collecting as much money as possible.
5. Promoting Hindu and Muslim unity, and
6. Ridding Hinduism of the curse of untouchability, and otherwise purifying ourselves by avoiding intoxicating drinks and drugs".

"Have we honest, earnest, industrious, patriotic workers for this very simple programme? If we have, Swaraj will be established in India before next October".

It will thus be noticed that all the three conditions mentioned only five months ago had now gone by the board. New ones were set up instead, evidently not without reason. For while the elections to the Legislatures were already a story of the past, Mr. Gandhi had by that time recognised the impossibility of making any further headway with the boycott of Schools and Courts. So he re-shuffled his cards. Seeing the danger of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses breaking out in untoward directions, he now placed non-violence in the first rank. Next came the Congress constitution—which had only been adopted by the Congress at Nagpur. The most important change, however, is to be seen in the sudden promotion that Mr. Gandhi gave to the cult of Spinning, from an addendum to the 3 original conditions to the third rank in the six new conditions—and practically to the first rank among operative methods of intrinsic value.

And yet an out-sider might naturally ask how the old three or the new six conditions could possibly help a subject nation in

wresting power from a great Empire? It might be granted indeed that these conditions might help a nation to mobilise and array its forces for even a non-violent battle. They might also help the leaders of the masses to work out a semi-moral and semi-mental revolution in the helpless and cringing attitude of the people. But history does not know of any army—violent and still less non-violent—which by its mere formation frightened any worthy enemy into premature surrender. Yet forgetting the most aggressive and militant item of his own programme—civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes—Mr. Gandhi almost designed to hypnotise the nation into believing that it had only to shout and sing, and march in empty processions and spin and spin and the Viceroy and the Governors would leave the shores of India with all their civil servants and armies as soon as India began to produce sufficient hand-spun and hand-woven cloth to clothe its naked millions.

Nor did he succeed in explaining this grotesque gap in his programme when he was ruthlessly heckled by the correspondent of the TIMES during the Nagpur Congress Session.

"The people are assimilating day by day," he declared during this interview (YOUNG INDIA, 29th December, 1920), "the spirit of non-violence, not necessarily as a creed but as an inevitable policy. I expect most startling results, more startling than the discoveries of Sir J. C. Bose, from the acceptance by the people of non-violence. If the Government could be assured beyond any possibility of doubt that no violence would ever be offered by us, the Government would from that moment alter its character unconsciously and involuntarily, but none the less surely on that account".

When prodded further on the question, he said:

"This movement is an endeavour to purge the present Government of selfishness and greed, which determines almost every one of its activities. Suppose that we have made it impossible by dissociation from them to feed their greed. They might not wish to remain in India, as happened in the case of Somaliland......"

Speaking further on the subject, he ruled out as improbable such voluntary evacuation of India by the Britishers and fixed on the re-orientation of British rule, and the establishment of a costitution (of course within the British Empire) "exactly in accordance

with the wishes of the people of India," as the goal of his movement.

Thus apparently Mr. Gandhi hoped that faced by the united opposition (mental and moral if not actually operative) of the masses of India, organised along the Congress lines, the British people will "realise the hideous injustice which in their name the imperial ministers and their representatives in India have perpetrated". In fact, he actually expected—even if he did not say so in so many words—that if only the people of India massed themselves in their overwhelming millions, under the Congress banner without breaking out into acts of violence and successfully carried out the boycott of all foreign—including British—cloth before the end of the year, the Viceroy would invite him, with a view to arrive at a settlement of India's claims. And whatever he could then secure by agreement—and of course, he would agree to nothing that was not reasonably compatible with the Congress Resolutions—would be undoubtedly hailed as the fulfilment of Swaraj.

Now, reading this interview together with the second article on the conditions of Swaraj, one is bound to confess that the slogan of 'Swaraj in one year' must undoubtedly be considered the most utterly fantastic and delusive proposition to set out before any intelligent people. Even if we grant that Mr. Gandhi omitted all reference to the aggressive items of the programme at the beginning of the year from a tactical point of view, three sovereign considerations would suffice to convince any sane person of the utter impossibility of fulfilling the high hopes that were then undoubtedly evoked in the minds of many millions.

Firstly, the whole basis of the movement was to court suffering for ourselves without hitting or punishing the enemy. If any blood was to be spilled, it was to be our blood and not the enemy's. Mr. Gandhi told us so often as he continues to do even now—that we would get self-government as soon as we could convince the English people that the life and liberty of every English man, woman and child would be more safe in the hands of an Indian Government than it is under the present British Government. There was to be no violence—even no retaliation for any wrongs that might be inflicted upon us. In fact, the whole purpose was to expose in its ghastly nakedness all the brutality of the British Government by cheerfully undergoing as much suffering as possible.

The more the better. And, of course, it was perfectly well-known that Mr. Gandhi would suspend and abandon his entire campaign the minute he saw any chance of any responsible section of the people breaking out into untoward violence.

Now, bearing this fundamental consideration in view, it is impossible to see how the British could be compelled to transfer power even if all the conditions set out either in the first or the second article were fully carried out by the people? Governments are not individuals. They are systems. They represent the mass psychology of certain governing classes in India and England. And the fundamental fallacy that has vitiated—and even now continues to vitiate—all Mr. Gandhi's plans in the matter, is that he continues to cherish hopes of converting the heart of the enemy by facing him with the sacrifice of the innocents. While no doubt the hearts of individual Englishmen, in India as well as in England, have been converted in a certain measure by the brutal incarceration and massacres of the Indian people, the mentality of the British governing classes has been, if anything, even more thoroughly hardened by seeing the dogged determination of the Indian people as embodied in the *Satyagraha* movement.

But let us assume further that the Congress initiated the civil disobedience movement, and even the campaign of non-payment of taxes. Now, of course, if such movements were started on a most extensive scale all throughout the country, they would certainly serve to paralyse to a certain extent the machinery of Government. But I maintain that even such paralysis would only compel Government to re-shuffle its cards, and to inveigle the bourgeois leaders of the Congress party into an empty compromise—such as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of February 1931. For it is evident that Britain would mobilise all its financial resources the world over for some, or even many years, with a view to carry on its Government in India even at a tremendous loss, if the people did not resort to serious violence all over the country. Besides, Government would only succeed in goading the people of some district or other in this vast land, to resort to violence, and make it the excuse for initiating martial law on the one hand, and compelling Mr. Gandhi to suspend his movement on the other. And when we further remember that Gandhi himself had laid down many severe and sanctimonious qualifications

for civil resisters, and for the village people who would be qualified to resort to non-payment of taxes, it is evident that these extreme measures could only be admitted on a comparatively small scale, and in very limited areas, and no Government in the world would be frightened out of its wits—and still less compelled to surrender its power—by the exhibition, however heroic, of suffering and martyrdom of even some thousands of people, a few out of the two hundred and fifty districts of India.

Secondly, let us see how Mr. Gandhi would succeed in purging the present Government of selfishness and greed by declaring a boycott of all foreign—including British—cloth. Mr. Gandhi has been repeating the cry in and out of season all these years, that the British would find no reason to remain in India as soon as India ceased to buy their textile goods. He has repeatedly harped on the enormous loss of sixty crores of rupees—£45,000,000—to India from the import of foreign textiles Now, even putting Britain's share of the trade at the highest figure of thirty millions is it not preposterous to believe that the British Imperialists would find no use for India at all as soon as they were deprived of this one item of exploitation? One is puzzled to see how such cheap and ignorant clap-trap has gone almost unchallenged in India for so many years, and how so many thousands—if not hundreds of thousands, of honest and sincere workers have been deluded into believing in the end of British domination so soon as its Indian trade in textiles was destroyed. One has only to understand that Britain's total trade with India every year amounts to many hundreds of million pounds and that it draws in interest over its Indian investments alone some £150,000,000, to understand the utter hollowness of this pompous pretence. Carried away, however, by subjective idealism and objective blindness, Mr. Gandhi has failed to understand the real sense and purport of British domination. British rule does not merely connote the administration of a hundred thousand Englishmen in India or of its sixty thousand soldiers. It really represents the domination of the enormous capital of Britain, and its Dominions, over the enormous raw products and the cheap labour of the millions of India. And it is easy to see that British capitalism could easily devise a hundred and one new methods of exploiting India's resources and cheap labour power so long as it continued its political or even financial domination over the country. So the

boycott of British cloth, even if it were fully carried out, while it would no doubt succeed in hitting some mill-owners in Manchester, and render some few thousand English people workless, would not have even a ghost of a chance of packing away Englishmen from India's shores. On the contrary, resourceful English financiers would immediately devise fresh methods of exploiting India's man-power and materials as soon as they lost all hope of dumping their cotton goods on India. It would be another matter, of course, if a thorough-going and scientific boycott were proclaimed, not only against British cloth, but against all British products and even British factories and business houses planted in India itself. But Mr. Gandhi has never (before 1932) contemplated, still less be preached that. In fact, he has really fought shy uptill now of the boycott even of British cloth ***as British cloth.*** For he has always sought to include it in his general boycott of foreign cloth. It is, therefore, clear as daylight that the boycott of British or even of foreign cloth could not bring Swaraj, not only in one year, but even in a hundred years.

Thirdly and lastly, the time limit of one year must be pronounced as preposterous in any event. For Mr. Gandhi set out the limit almost the very minute that the Congress adopted his complex, hydra-headed Resolution of non-co-operation. Further, the new constitution itself was actually adopted three months after. And it was so easy to see that Provincial, District and Taluka Committees themselves would take at least six months to be in full working order throughout the country. Besides, several new Provinces, like Gujarat, Andhra, Kerala and Orissa were just formed according to the new constitution. Enormous spade work had thus to be done to set the very machinery of Congress in motion. And then the new message of the Congress, involving manifold duties for different classes and sections of the people, had to be thoroughly explained and imbibed. Again, it was not a small thing to collect such a big sum as one crore of rupees, such as had never been demanded or subscribed before in the national cause—from such a poor country—and all work, educational, organisational and propagandist would naturally be carried out most effectively after the money was at hand. Everything then considered, it was quite easy to foresee that even the constructive, apart from the militant, items of the new programme, could not be carried out to any

appreciable degree before the end of the year. And yet Mr. Gandhi had no difficulty in pronouncing that Swaraj would be obtained before the year was out.

But I need not labour to elaborate my point any more. The absurdity of the slogan is quite apparent to those who can look at it from an objective point of view. And Mr. Gandhi himself has implicitly confessed his error by wisely dropping any similar slogans from his great campaign of 1930-31.

Still it must be confessed that a slogan that would have been laughed at if announced by an ordinary politician, worked well, because it was exclaimed by Mr. Gandhi, the saint and the prophet. I and many other political workers had indeed great difficulty in swallowing this huge joke. But as the movement went on, and as we saw this joke hypnotising hundreds of thousands all over the country and rousing their spirits to a crescendo of enthusiasm, we eventually permitted our intelligence to surrender to the hypnotism of the national cry. And very soon we onrselves began to repeat this great promise of the new Messiah from a thousand platforms, while our intellectual doubts remained in a state of suspended animation.

XXXIV

BETRAYAL OF STUDENTS.

HAVING lighted the great fires of freedom at Calcutta and more especially at Nagpur, Mr. Gandhi knew very well that he must either continue to feed them or allow them to die out. But instead of feeding them with real genuine substance, he started blowing hot air on the glowing embers with a view to set them ablaze. So instead of devising definite and practical formulas—like 'more land and less rents and revenues for the peasant', and 'higher wages and better working conditions for the workers', etc.—to inspire the different sections of the people of this vast land to place themselves under the banner of the Congress, he sought to enthuse their hearts by trumpeting forth the empty and fantastic slogan of 'Swaraj in a year'. This did work, of course—though only for a short time. But these empty slogans have the uncanny knack of being pretty soon exhausted and require to be promptly followed up by other catch-words with a view to feed the fires of mass agitation. And Mr. Gandhi, intoxicated with the heady fumes of grotesque subjectivism, felt almost compelled to trumpet forth some new catch-words even before one month had elapsed since the Nagpur Congress.

We have already seen that Mr. Gandhi had promoted the item of the spinning wheel in his programme of non-co-operation Of course, he had been continuously preparing the ground for this development. Starting with the doctrine of "Swaraj in Swadeshi" (10th December 1919), he had gone on to expound in various articles the sovereign economics of *khaddar* during the year 1920, and even beguiled his readers with the "music of the spinning wheel. He had even spotted the spinning wheel in the Koran and the Gita, to the agreeable surprise of his Hindu and Muslim followers. Indeed, his progress from Swadeshi to the Charkha was so rapid that he began to preach the utter futility and even the harmfulness of starting any 'Swadeshi Stores" for selling anything (like Indian mill manufactures) except hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. He had no difficulty in pinning the national

duty of spinning, so boldly enunciated in the Resolutions of Calcutta and Nagpur Congress, on every individual by the beginning of 1921. And as Mr. Gandhi found the utter impossibility of making any further headway with the boycott of School and Courts, he now began to exhaust all his eloquence on the doctrine of the spinning wheel, which alone would serve like a magic wand to bring the two boons of food and liberty to the starving people of India.

But before this doctrine was more fully elaborated at Bezwada, Mr. Gandhi suddenly chose to dump the doubtful gift on the devoted heads of the thousands—perhaps a few hundred thousand students—who had responded to the clarion call of the Congress by leaving the Government controlled schools and colleges to join the national institutions in the different Provinces. As I shall presently show, Mr. Gandhi made this sudden *volte face* only towards the end of January 1921, when he was practically convinced of the utter impossibility of drawing any more students into his fold from the Government institutions. And there is no doubt that but for the high position that he held as a religious prophet and now as a political dictator, this new policy of his would undoubtedly have been denounced by the enraged and resentful students as an act of gross and treacherous betrayal.

For writing only so late as the 17th November 1920 on the National University of Gujrat, Mr. Gandhi gave quite a different presentation of the ideals and programme of national education. Writing in YOUNG INDIA on the subject, he clearly stated :

"The National University stands to-day as a protest against British injustice and as a vindication of national honour...........It wants to rescue the Indian vernaculars from unmerited oblivion, and make them the foundation of national regeneration in Indian culture. **It holds that a systematic study of Asiatic cultures is not less essential than the study of Western Sciences for a complete education for life.** The vast treasure of Sanskrit and Arabic, Persian and Pali and Magadhi, have to be ransacked in order to discover wherein lies the source of strength for the nation .... The spirit of independence will be fostered not only through the religion politics and history, but through vocational training also, which alone can give the youths of the country economic independence and a backbone that comes out of a sense of

self-respect. The University hopes to organise Higher School throughout the Mofussil towns, so that education may be spread broadcast and filtered down to the masses as early as possible".

Thus had Mr. Gandhi rightly summarised the courses and curriculums of the Gujarat National College and University, on which we had then set our heart. I, then, as one of the Secretaries of the University Committee, was overjoyed to find in Principal Gidwani a valiant champion of the synthesis of Eastern culture, with the scientific and industrial as well as economic and political studies of the Western world. We had all then dreamt that with the help of the funds that were then pouring on the University from all sides, we would very soon be able to fit up our Libraries and Laboratories on most modern lines (Principal Gidwani even succeeded in getting a good donation from Mr. S. R. Bomanji for the Library), and to offer varied courses on literary, scientific and industrial subjects to the students. Principal Gidwani was even more enthusiastic than other in reading voraciously the latest books on the Red Russia and the Gospel of commmunism. We had many discussions in the excellent group that first centred round this modern yet patriotic educationist and we all then dreamt that we would really succeed in setting up an institution thoroughly modern no less than ardently nationalist in the then political capital of India.

But unfortunately reactionary tendencies were not slow in raising up their heads within the pioneer group itself. Mr. Kelelkar, ths pious Professor of Mr. Gandhi's Ashram, was the scholastic leaders of these pious reactionaries. So a tug-of-war was set up within the ranks of the University itself-between the conflicting forces headed by Principal Gidwani on the one hand and Professor Kelelkar on the other. While Mr. Gandhi remained far away from the scene of these operations, his continual insistence on instruction in ancient religious and culture served undoubtedly to strengthen the hands of Professor Kelelkar. Very soon Muni Jinavijayaji, a Jaina scholar-ascetic appeared on the scene, and was suddenly authorised, under Mr. Gandhi's personal instruction, to start an Oriental Research Institution under the auspices of the university. This new Institution very soon became the hot-bed of all reactionary and obscurantist tendencies. And it is no secret

that Principal Gidwani was presently rendered thoroughly uncom fortable in his job by the silent but firm opposition of the reactionaries, and was eventually hounded out of the University itself—though long after the year of Swaraj was over.

Mr. Gandhi travelling over the whole of India undoubtedly saw the difficulties that would confront him in striking the proper balance between the ancient and the modern cultures in settling the courses and curriculums of the National Schools and Colleges. Instead, however, of leaving this difficult task to suitable compepetent experts, he sought to cut the Gordian knot by converting the Schools and even the Colleges into Spinning Schools and Factories before the end of January 1921.

The complete conversion of Deshabandhu Das at Nagpur opened out tremendous possibilities of opening a vigorous campaign for the boycott of Government institutions in Bengal. "About the middle of January, on an appeal by Deshabandhu C. R. Das, thousands of students left their colleges and examinations. Mahatma Gandhi visited Calcutta and opened the National College on the 4th February. He also visited Patna for a second time, and formally opened the National College and inaugurated the Behar Vidyapith."

But to what end?

Mr. Gandhi threw a veritable bombshell into the entire Congress world and of course without consulting any Congress Committee or leaders whatever by announcing the new programme of national institutions in the following dictatorial words. (YOUNG INDIA 19th January 1921):

"We are engaged in a spiritual war. We are not living in normal times. Normal activities are always suspended in abnormal times. And if we are out to gain Swaraj in a year's time it means that we must concentrate on our goal to the exclusion of everything else. I, therefore, venture to suggest to the students (studying in National institutions) all over India to suspend their normal studies for one year, and devote their time to the manufacture of yarn by hand-spinning. It will be the greatest act of service to the Motherland, and the most natural contribution to the attainment of Swaraj. During the late war, our rulers attempted to turn every factory into an arsenal for turning out bullets of

lead. During this war of ours, I suggest every National School and College being turned into a factory for preparing cones of yarn for the nation".

Lest, however, any boy student might object to spinning is a feminine occupation, he proceeded to observe :

"Let no one decry the work as being derogatory to the dignity of man or students. It was an art confined to the women of India because the latter had more leisure. And being graceful, musical, and as it did not involve any great exertion, it had become the monopoly of women. But it is certainly as graceful for either sex as is music for instance."

"**I feel so much more clearly than before that during** the transition period we must devote exclusive attention to spinning and certain other things of immediate national use so as to make up for past neglect."

No wonder then that Mr. Gandhi had the hardihood to tell even the enthusiastic and intelligent students of Bengal (19th January 1921):

"And in place of your suspended studies I would urge you to study the methods of bringing about Swaraj as quietly as possible within the year of grace. I present you with the spinning wheel, and suggest to you that on it depends India's economic salvation."

"But you are at liberty to reject it if you wish, and go to the College that has been promised to you by Mr. Das. Most of your fellow students in the National College at Gujarat have undertaken to give at least four hours to spinning every day."

So Mr. Gandhi substituted "exclusive attention to spinning and certain things of immediate national use" (meaning perhaps a study of the national language, etc.) "for the systematic study of Asiatic culture" and "Western Science" and "Religion, Politics, History and vocational training." This was, if my memory serves me right, the first dictatorial fiat that he issued on his own responsibility after he had assumed complete power over the Congress. It might, indeed have been thought that having at last secured the willing and necessary co-operation of great political thinkers

and veterans like Deshabandhu Das, Lala Lajpat Rai and Pandit Motilal Nehru at the Nagpur Congress, Mr. Gandhi would, at any rate, consult them and seek their approval before initiating new policies of far-reaching importance. But evidently Mr. Gandhi prefers to regard himself as the centre and circumference of everything. His whole view of life and polities is essentially based on a philosophical system of spiritual but anarchical individualism. Consciously or uncousciously he has taken himself to be superior to any organisation of which he has formed a part. And the man who did not wait even for a month to launch his great campaign of non-violent non-co-operation to seek the approval of Congress, was certainly not going to wait for a single minute to consult any of the leaders, however capable and distinguished they might be, whom he had now over-awed and vanquished at two successive sessions of the Congress. This flat. then, it must be clearly understood, marks the beginning of the new epoch of Mr. Gandhi's sole and personal dictatorship over the political destinies of India. And while he has since insisted in the most unctuous terms on the duty of every Congress man to carry out every Resolution of the Congress and his pocket Committees in a most scrupulous manner, he has not hesitated to initiate new policies and to take drastic action on his own responsibility with a view to compel the Congress organisations to register and approve of them as *faits accomplis*.

Now Mr. Gandhi's new plan of converting the National Schools and Colleges, and even Universities into Spinning and Weaving institutions, undoubtedly served to waken, as with a rude shock, many of those who had joined his Educational Movement with the genuine desire of evolving a really new and creative type of national culture and education. We, in Gujarat, had really taken the initiative in starting the first National University in India. And while Mr. Gandhi's Ashram supplied one batch of teachers and workers to the University and College the other batch consisting, let me add, of some first-class graduates, splendid organisers and brilliant and enthusiastic teachers, was drawn from the Gujarat Education Society, which I was really privileged to found with their assistance. We had really started our work many years ago. But it was during the year 1920 that we succeeded in founding our Society on the lines of

the Education Society of Poona, and apart from other institutions to our credit, including a model Primary School and a Girls' College in Ahmedabad, we have also taken charge of the new school which was making rapid headway under the new staff of brilliant and self-sacrificing teachers. We were also then seriously thinking of starting a movement for founding a new and a more independent College in Ahmedabad, when we were suddenly overtaken by the new movement of Non-co-operation. Of course, neither I nor any of my colleagues hesitated for a single moment to sacrifice all our sober and constructive dreams of educational work in the interests of the great national movement. We therefore, let go this High School and plunged whole-heartedly into this movement of the new National University. My friend Messrs. Pathak, Shah and Parikh enrolled themselves in the service of the new Institution from the very start, and hoped to fulfil all their high educational dreams on an even better and a vaster scale through the medium of the National University. Their grief and misery therefore on hearing of Mr. Gandhi's new decree could be better imagined than described. Their great hopes were nearly nipped in the bud. While they agreed to spin as a measure of discipline they never surrendered their independent judgment in the matter. They indeed remained firm, if unaggressive protestants, within the holy sanctum of the National University. And now that even a more rigid dictatorial policy has finally succeeded in driving them entirely out of the folds of the University, these friends as well as the so-called University—in spite of its imposing buildings erected with the money of some rich patrons—remain the wrecks and remnants of what they really might have been if only Mr. Gandhi had respected the sanctity of the educational domain, and had not trampled so ruthlessly and unwillingly over the promising plans that he himself had so piously planted only a few months before.

While Mr. Gandhi's new orders were carried out in varying degrees in different parts of India, they naturally came in for prompt and logical execution in the educational organisations in Gujarat. The Senate of the National University was, of course, promptly convened to register and approve of the new dictation. All doubts and protests were summarily silenced in the name of the omniscient Mahatma. and the emergencies of the national war.

The National College was naturally the first institution which came in for this new orientation. Principal Gidwani was summarily asked to re-organise his institution so as to devote more time to spinning than to any book education. The patriotic Principal went even one better. Deriving his inspiration from intimate converse with the Mahatma himself—he set out sometimes from the College at one o'clock in the morning to wait on the Mahatma at two so as to catch him before the morning prayers—he struck upon the idea of starting a novel institution called the Swaraj-Ashram within the University itself. And the College students were then summarily asked to decide if they would join the new Ashram in order to devote themselves entirely to spinning and to some rudimentary political courses with a view to start work in villages immediately, or if they would pursue the original studies at the College—with of course a lot of spinning thrown into it. And a great many of them then decided—thanks to the magnetic enthusiasm of Gidwani—to join the new Ashram which presently became a good breeding place for young political workers:—Thus the ideal of national education was reduced to a more mockery and farce, by the young students droning away over the spinning wheels instead of cultivating the intellect, emotions and imagination.

While I was thoroughly disgusted with the new orientation of the College, I then saw some promise in the new Ashram that the ingenuity of Principal Gidwani had devised. While he also spun away for many hours, his whole mentality and outlook remained intensely political. I, therefore, succeeded in forming an admirable partnership with him. Burdened with the responsibility of organising the whole Province as the first Secretary of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee, I was very much struck with the possibility of recruiting a good number of able village workers from Gidwani's Ashram. Nor did the clever Principal hesitate to draft them in my service before they had hardly spun or learnt anything in the Ashram within a few weeks. Staying near the Ashram therefore, I immediately started posting volunteers in groups of two and three in the different Talukas of the Province. And I must confess that most of them gave a splendid account of themselves, not only in organising usual Congress work and some spinning work in the villages, but also in administering relief and in generally

developing political discontent in villages situated far away from any railway lines.

The new axe was very soon applied to the High Schools and to the Primary Schools. The conversion of these institutions into spinning factories could not indeed be distinguished by any redeeming feature. For these could not possibly give us any workers who could help in village organisation. Many of the High School boys, however, ceased to take any interest in their spinning programme at School and began to devote themselves to the work of enlisting Congress members, and some other miscellaneous political work in the towns and cities.

The Primary Schools, however, presented a most shameful spectacle under the new scheme. I occasionally felt that the University had committed a serious breach of faith with the parents who had entrusted their children to us for giving them a good education in the three R's. Instead we set up third-rate and fourth-rate schools in unclean and misshapen buildings, which were nearly empty of furniture, and which were only graced with a few spinning wheels—most of them half broken, disjointed or out of order for want of some part or the other—and with some dumps of cotton slivers (most of them mill slivers) and ugly cones of bad insufferable yarn, which could never be used on the weaving loom. It was indeed a most miserable and melancholy sight for me to see this tragedy being perpetrated in school after school in the villages which I visited for political propaganda. And though I was then too much taken up with the political issue to think of these schools except as centres of the new political activity and of the teachers as anything but the torch-bearers of the new light of Swaraj, a horrible doubt had already begun to eat into the vitals of my heart, as to whether it were not a sin to the new generation of boys and girls and to the sacred ideals of national education to perpetrate such a farce in the name of a holy war.

Large amounts of money were collected, not only for the University but also for the different schools in the Province. Most of it, I am sorry to say, was used in wasting the precious time of young boys and girls on the primitive spinning wheel and producing yarn which was worse than useless. It was indeed a criminal waste of time and

money. All that we got from this shameful holocaust was the spirit of political revolt which could certainly, however, have been put to a much better use. As usual the spirit that we generated, not only in Gujarat but all throughout the country, stood in marked contrast to the miserable poverty of our actual achievements. Such a state must indeed be pronounced to be one of unstable equilibrium. Much time would not pass before the promising edifice collapsed, and then would come a period of dismal disillusionment and terrible re-action.

After fighting for some more months within the University which I had helped to found, and chafing bitterly at the ignoble restrictions which were being placed upon it by Gandhi and his pious followers, I finally resigned from the Senate during the month of May 1921.

I did not realise then, as I do to-day, that Mr. Gandhi instinctively, if not deliberately, sought to utilize the vast revolutionary force that his movement had engendered in the youth of the country for the barren and suicidal activity of the spinning wheel. How he similarly tried to stem the rising tide of revolt among the workers of the factories and the peasants of the villages in the very beginning of 1921 will be revealed in the next chapter.

XXXIV

BETRAYAL OF WORKERS & PEASANTS

THE rosy tints of a new dawn marked the early month of 1921—the year of Swaraj. India's heart palpitated with a new hope and new faith. The Congress, and above all Mr. Gandhi, were out to create a new Heaven and a new Earth. Many millions took Mr. Gandhi seriously when he said we were really to work out revolution—albeit a peaceful revolution—among people and Government alike. Men began to walk down the streets and work through their life with a new sense of dignity and self-respect, a new courage and a new determination to secure their rights at all costs. And the new doctrine, though apparently evoked with a view to secure a political transformation, had its immediate repercussions in the agricultural and the industrial world, where the peasants subjected to chains of serfdom and the workers caught in the toils of modern machinery, began to show a feverish but natural desire to break the chains which held them in slavery.

No wonder then, that as Mr. Gandhi wrote in YOUNG INDIA on the 16th February 1921, "strikes are the order of the day. They are the symptoms of the existing unrest". It was the obvious duty then of Gandhi and the Congress to welcome these signs of the itmes and to organise labour to fight against the tyranny of the capitalists and to guide and strengthen the movement along proper lines. The Congress, at any rate, should not have found it difficult to detail some of its leading workers to organise different kinds of labour in all parts of India, to work out eventually a constructive synthesis between the industrial and the political movement.

Far from doing anything, however, in this direction, Mr. Gandhi immediately began to show signs of nervousness on seeing Labour raise its head proudly against the factory owners. He began to damn Labour and Labour leaders with faint praise, admitting that labourers "have every reason for dissatisfaction," and that "they are being taught, and justly, to regard themselves as being chiefly

instrumental in enriching their employers". He suddenly made a right-about-turn by saying that "in my opinion it will be a most serious mistake to make use of Labour strikes for such a (political) purpose," and that "they did not fall within the plan of non-violent Non-co-operation".

Now it must be remembered in judging the value of these words, that Mr. Gandhi had never cultivated any acquaintance or relations with organised Labour in the whole of India, except in his pet corner of Ahmedabad. Nor did the Congress maintain any organisational touch with the increasing number of Labour Unions and Associations throughout the country. It may be said, without fear of contradiction, that there was hardly a prominent political leader in the Congress then who had ever led any Labour struggle in any part of the country. When Mr. Gandhi, therefore, sought summarily to denounce some strikes as political strikes (with which he associated what he called 'sympathetic and humanitarian strikes' when he wrote on the great strike on the Assam-Bengal Railway on 22nd September 1921), he evidently hit off the mark. He certainly wrote without full and sufficient information when as author of the non-violent non-co-operation Movement he levelled his first attack on industrial strikes in the beginning of the year. The strikes that he sought to condemn were most assuredly sympathetic strikes. But sympathetic strikes are cosidered indispensable weapons in the armoury of organised Labour throughout the world. For while the Labour leaders were inspired with a full measure of the political enthusiasm that was then sweeping over the land, they undoubtedly resorted to strikes, not with a view to bring Government to its knees, but to line up their men with the labourers in other departments or industries who were out on strike on purely economic grounds against their own employers. Thus Mr. Gandhi resorted to the cheap device of giving a dog a bad name and hanging him.

But the reader will be even more astounded on seeing Mr. Gandhi's strange dictums for conducting strikes in this world of the twentieth century. He had apparently learnt nothing since he conducted and surrendered the Ahmedabad Weavers' Strike in 1919. While, therefore, asking labourers to resort to strikes only with a view to better their own prospects, and "to raise themselves to the status of part proprietors," he set out the following two

extraordinary conditions for conducting their strikes: "1. Strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the strike period without falling back upon Union funds, and should, therefore, occupy themselves in some useful and productive temporary occupation" (such as carding, spinning and weaving, as he elaborated in another article on 22nd September 1921) and "2. A strike is no remedy when there is enough other Labour to replace strikers. In that case, in the event of unjust terms or inadequate wages or the like, resignation is the remedy".

These terms carry their own condemnation. However much Mr. Gandhi might, in his opinion, have succeeded—though he really failed even then—by observing such conditions in 1919, or even earlier perhaps in South Africa—they must be pronounced as thoroughly obsolete and retrograde in 1921. What did the labourers contribute their pennies for every week and month if not to maintain themselves when they were engaged in a life and death struggle with their exploiters? The experiment again of maintaining labourers on any temporary occupation failed most ignominiously under Mr. Gandhi's own leadership in 1919. He ought to have known that nobody could learn weaving in a day, or even in a few weeks, and the paltry one or two annas that a labourer unaccustomed to spin could earn by plying the wheel during the whole day, would not serve to keep him and his family alive.

Then again there would be vast numbers of unemployed in a poor country like India to serve "the boss class" as black-legs and strike breakers. Their presence, therefore, must render any strike impossible and must condemn Labour to eternal slavery in the modern world. Labourers, therefore, should be as much entitled to picket at the gates of factories with a view to prevent the entry of black-legs as any Congress volunteers to stand at the doors of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops under Mr. Gandhi's and Congress' orders, to prevent the sale of liquor and foreign cloth.

It is evident, therefore, that Mr. Gandhi was really determined not only not to allow Labour to participate in the political movement, but not even to fight any wage wars against the capitalist classes, while he was trying to unite all sections of the Nation in a political struggle against the foreign Government. Congress has time and again shown a most stubborn and perverse attitude in

the matter of Labour struggles during these last ten years. And it would not be therefore too uncharitable to conclude that Mr. Gandh had really designed to secure the pecuniary and moral support of the whole capitalist class in the Congress Movement by virtually condemning unheard all the fights that Labour sought to wage against his newly found friends.

The same moral is again brought home to our minds when we turn to Mr. Gandhi's sanctimonious dictums in the matter of the peasants' rights and their war against the oppressive landlords.

It was again at the beginning of 1921, that the thrice oppressed peasants of the United Provinces were inspired by the new spirit of self-reliance to inaugurate a great agrarian .movement in U. P., which had its origin in the Agrarian trouble between landlords and tenants on account of the latter's refusal to pay illegal and oppressive cesses. Large bodies of men collected in several places and several riots took place in several places. The police dispersed the mob by opening fire in some of these places, and it took more than a month to restore quiet". Thus Babu Rajendra Prasad has summarised the situation in his introduction to YOUNG INDIA.

One would think that here again the Congress, re-organised now as the National Government of the Land, would seek to organise the tenants to wage a war, however peaceful, against the "illegal and oppressive cesses" as well as the exorbitant rents that they normally extorted from the tenants. It is only sufficient to cast a glance at the following figures of landlord's rent and Government revenue demands in the United Provinces, to realise the obvious injustice of the tenants' fight :—

(The figures are in lakhs)‡

Year	Landlord Rent	Government Revenue
1898-99	12,11	6,19
1914-15	15,93	6.51
1929-30	19,40	7,07

‡ From the AGRARIAN DISTRESS IN THE UNITED PROVINCES issued by the Committee of the U. P. Congress Committee 1931.

Assuming that the figures stood in 1921 at nearly the same level as they were in 1929-30, the landlords' demand had increased in the present century by 60 per cent, while the Government demand had increased by 13 per cent. The illegal cesses and taxes were, of course, in addition to the colossal sum of 19 crores which impecunious peasants of U.P. were forced to pay to the greedy landlords and Talukdars.

It was, therefore, a correct instinct which inspired the miserable peasants in that unfortunate Province to raise up their heads against the landlords during the very first moment of their new awakening. And how did Mr. Gandhi, the self-styled friend and saviour of the dumb millions of India—which, of course, largely consist of the peasants of India—greet this new awakening? With a view to give his so-called instructions to the peasants of the United Provinces, he wrote in YOUNG INDIA on the 9th March, 1921, (and it is instructive to see that while he has burdened his precious message with all kinds of moral formulas and pious flourishes he chose to dismiss the whole question of the zamindars' extortions in one single sentence.)

"Should there be any grievances against zamindars they should be reported to Pandit Motilal Nehru, and his advice followed".

Was it not indeed the duty of Pandit Nehru and Mr. Gandhi himself to employ even a few of the redundant workers who had been drafted in the pious campaign of the spinning wheel, to make a close and searching enquiry into the conditions of the peasants and to guide them along just and proper lines in their righteous fight against the landlords? But it was indeed too much to expect of Mr. Gandhi, for a little later getting even more nervous over the rising tide of the peasants' campaign, he sternly forbade them from waging any war whatever against their landlord enemies. He unburdened himself in YOUNG INDIA (on May 18, 1921) as follows :

"While the U. P. Government is crossing the bounds of propriety and intimidating people, there is little doubt that the kisans too are not making wise use of their newly found power. In several zamindaries they are said to have over-shot the mark, taken the law into their own hands, and to have become impatient

of anybody who would not do as they wish. They are abusing social boycott and turning it into an instrument of violence. They are reported to have stopped the supply of water, barber and their paid services to the zamindars in some instances, and even suspended payment of the rent due to them. *The Kisan Movement has received an impetus from non-co-operation, but it is anterior to and independent of it.* Whilst we will not hesitate to advise the kisans when the moment comes to suspend payment of taxes to the Government, it is not contemplated that at any stage of non-co-operation we would seek to deprive the zamindars of their rent. The Kisan Movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the kisan and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them. The kisans must be advised scrupulously to abide by the terms of their agreement with the zamindars, whether such is wrong or unfair, from custom. Where a customary or a written contract is bad they may not try to up-root it by violence or without previous reference to the zamindar. In every case there should be a friendly discussion with the zamindar and an attempt made to arrive at a settlement. A capacity for Swaraj depends on our capacity for solving without reference to or intervention of the Government, all the varied and complex problems that must arrive in the affairs of one of the biggest and most ancient nation like ours".

So while Mr. Gandhi did not want "to deprive the zamindars of their rent" at any stage of non-co-operation, he asked the peasants to get even bad contracts rectified by discussion and negotiation with the zamindars. In fact, however, there were no real contracts between the two parties. The so-called contracts represented the imposition of the arbitrary authority of the landlords over the helpless peasants. And further many illegal and oppressive cesses were levied on the tenants without any reference to them at all. Then again the figures given above show conclusively how ruthlessly the landlords were mounting up their demands, at a far more excessive rate than even the foreign government. It is, therefore, only just to conclude that Mr. Gandhi again deliberately shut his eyes to the tragic misery of the peasants and left them to the tender mercies of their worst enemies and tyrants, with a view to secure their help and support for the great national movement.

Can such a Movement ever succeed ? What is after all National non-co-operation if not an organised strike, agricultural and political, commercial and industrial, against the Government and its parasites and henchmen ? Such a strike, therefore, can only succeed in proportion to its numerical backing. And the large masses of India are obviously composed of the landless lessees of the soil, and of the vast army of workmen engaged in big Government and private railways, factories and workshops, as well as in private industries. Any strike, therefore, intended to paralyse the Government effectively must necessarily be grounded on the organised strength of the peasants and workers. But Mr. Gandhi evidently sought to keep peasants and workers under the iron heel of their immediate exploiters, and thus deprive the movement of the most potential source of power that alone could lead it to victory.

XXXVI

COLLECT ONE CRORE!

"IT was at a time when the Congress propaganda was making such rapid progress," writes Babu Rajendra Prasad (Introduction to YOUNG INDIA), and the country was passing through the first spell of repression that the All India Congress Committee met at Bezwada in the last week of March 1921, and chalked out a programme of work for the following three months. It required that before the 30th June 1931 the Congress

(1) should raise one crore of rupees for the Swaraj Fund

(2) should enrol one crore of members for the Congress, and

(3) see twenty lakhs of spinning wheels working in the country.

"On account of the policy of repression started by the Government, which was held by the Committee to be totally unwarranted by the situation in the country, there was a desire expressed by many of the members that Civil Disobedience should be resorted to. The Committee, however, held that the country was not yet sufficiently disciplined, organised or ripe for the immediate taking up of Civil Disobedience, and it advised all those upon whom orders might be served voluntarily to conform to them, trusting that new workers would take the place of those disabled by the Government, and that the people at large instead of becoming frightened or disheartened, would continue their work of quiet organisation and construction".

In order to appreciate the full significance of these Resolutions, we must hark to the four stages of the programme of non-co-operation adopted first by the Khilafat Conference, and confirmed by Mr. Gandhi in YOUNG INDIA on 5th May 1920. One would have taught that the Congress Committee would call the country to adopt the second and the third stages of the programme, if not the fourth, as soon as it had not met with sufficient success in realising the first stage of its campaign. It is, therefore, worth

noting that, the Committee did preface its Resolution set out above by expressing a fair amount of satisfaction at the progress the Nation had made in boycotting Councils, Courts and Schools—though, of course, more still remained to be done even in these matters. Anyway, the Committee should have either to call for the triple boycott, or should have proceeded further to call upon civil servants and even the police and the military officers to leave Government service. The Committee however, did neither. And under the supreme leadership of Mr. Gandhi the Committee suddenly chose to go off the rails that had been set out before and embark on a thoroughly novel venture of enrolling members for collecting funds, and setting up spinning wheels in every home. Of course, the new move was made to appear as one for organising men, money and munitions for the national war. But while Mr. Gandhi still continued to repose complete confidence in his slogan of "Swaraj before September 1921" and only six months were then left for attaining the precious boon and continued to shout out he slogan of war on every platform, he deliberately chose to keep the country busy with all possible things except the one thing which alone could bring the country any nearer to Swaraj—the call for immediate downright battle.

The reason is, however, not far to seek. As we have seen before, the sovereign importance of the spinning wheel had dawned gradually on Mr. Gandhi's mind after he set out the programme of Swaraj in the fall of 1920. And if Swaraj was to be obtained by setting up hundreds of thousands of spinning wheels throughout the land, a large amount of money was obviously necessary. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, true to the instinct of the Bania that he is, realised the urgent necessity of collecting a large amount of money before venturing any further on the political fight. And whatever his philosophy of the utility of the spinning wheel might be, there is no doubt in my mind that he instinctively perceived the urgent necessity of some harmless activity like the spinning wheel which might keep the vast numbers of discontented youths and men and women in the big towns and cities, and even in the bigger villages, busy so as to prevent their energies from breaking out into any aggressive or militant channels.

The proverbial giant was indeed being roused from its sleep of ages, and Mr. Gandhi sought to keep him busy, like the trickster of old, with going up and down the ladder, so that he might not deal any devastating blows to his peaceful designs or to the hateful machinery of the Government.

The Government, however, was doing everything in its power to feed the fires of popular indignation. At first Lord Chelmsford, then the Viceroy of India, had tried to pooh-pooh the movement as the "most foolish of most foolish schemes." Presently, however, he was compelled by the march of events to view it in a more serious light. Even after the Calcutta Congress had adopted Mr. Gandhi's programme by an overwhelming majority, the Government of India issued a Communique on the 6th November 1920, stating that it had instructed "local governments to take action against those persons only who in furtherance of the movement had gone beyond the limits originally set by its organisers, and had by speech or writing incited the public to violence, or had attempted to tamper with the loyalty of the army or the police". "This restriction was, however," writes Babu Rajendra Prasad," "not observed in practice and from the beginning of March ownards, the country passed through a tide of repression, culminating in the months of November and December in the suppression of volunteer organisation, the promulgation of the seditious Meetings Act, and the arrest and incarceration of thousands of Indians. The first acts of repression were in connection with the Anti-Drink Campaign".

The Government had also deeply resented the boycott of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, proclaimed by the Congress when he landed at Madras on the 8th January 1921, to inaugurate the new Legislatures in the country. Then again the growth of the Akali Movement occasioned the ghastly tragedy at Nankana in February, 1921, and naturally gave the Government an excuse for mobilising their forces in the service of Law and Order.

In view then of the rising tide of Government repression, the Radical members of the Congress Committee were perfactly justified in asking the Committee for the authority to inaugurate Civil

Disobedience in such areas and under such safeguards as the Committee might deem fit. The Committee, however, while expressing adequate satisfaction with the progress of the movement in the country, deliberately refused to give any such sanctions.

And so the energy of the country was again sought to be side tracked into harmless channels. Of course, tremendous efforts were made by thousands of paripatetic workers all over the country to fulfil the Bezwada programme by the 30th June. And thanks to the energy and persistence—and may I add, the last minute pathetic and almost poignant appeals of Mr. Gandhi—the requisite sum of one crore of rupees was announced to have been subscribed on the night of the 30th June.

But curiously enough, Mr. Gandhi forgot to place similar emphasis on the enrolment of one crore of members and the working of twenty lakhs of spinning wheels. In fact, no figures regarding numbers and wheels were really published on or after the 30th June, while all insistence was concentrated on the collection of the crore. And Mr. Gandhi had no difficulty in heartily congratulating the country on a substantial realisation of the Bezwada programme, though two out of the three items remained enveloped in the shadows of uncertainty.

Of course, nobody put any inconvenient questions on this score to the holy man. There was a tremendous emotional tensity in the land. The Nation was caught up in a mighty wave of hero worship. The people at last saw in Mr. Gandhi the saint-politician who could compel even the heavens above to shower the manna of freedom upon them. No wonder then that "thousands of men and women assembled to have a glimpse of the great hero. Railway lines and stations were lined up by thousand of spectators who showered their love in the shape of flowers and money (and innumerable garlands of thick misshapen yarn) whenever the train carrying the Mahatma happened to pass by them," (Babu Rajendra Prasad in his introduction to YOUNG INDIA).

Women also were presently swept into the Movement by the rising tide of national enthusiasm. Their huge meetings became the new feature of the great campaign. And as Mr. Gandhi tuored round the country, women came in thousands—often removing their age—old veils to have a glimpse of the holy man, and to

shower their copper and silver, and even their golden ornaments and jewels, set with pearls and diamonds, at his feet.

All this, indeed, did credit to the Nation. But as Mr. Gandhi successfully diverted national enthusiasm into channels of personal hero-worship and the harmless activity of spinning, so also he burnt away this money and jewels on the high altar of the sacred wheel.

And when the movement was over, all the money was gone, and most of the spinning wheels were either relegated to the lofts and lumber rooms, or broken up and burnt to feed the winter fires on the family hearth.

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XXXVII

CLASH WITH VALABHBHAI PATEL.

WHILE Mr. Gandhi was staging his epic drama on the All-India stage, my over-zealous interpretation of the Congress programme presently brought me into a painful clash with its new leaders and their hardened majority. And my incessant struggles with them, in the educational as well as in the political sphere, very soon created in them a desire to hound me out of the Movement itself.

I was one of the first few young men who cherished and worked for a fully-fledged educational and political movement in Gujarat. Being the pioneer of the first Gujarat Educational Conference (1916), and one of the leading workers of the first Gujarat Political Conference (1917), I had since been the leading Secretary of the Permanent Educational and Political League established at Ahmedabad to carry on their activities throughout the year. I had swept the dust and set up a small desk in one of the smallest rooms in the Social Reform Hall which was presently destined to become the historic centre of the new political activity. I again had the proud privilege of taking the initiative—as I have mentioned before—in holding the Session of the Gujarat Political Conference (August, 1920,) which strengthened Mr. Gandhi's hands by adopting his entire programme of the non-violent non-co-operation on the eve of the Calcutta Congress. And I had since been appointed the Secretary of the Committee charged with the establishment of the National University of Gujarat, and also of the permanent Political Committee of the Gujarat Conference. I could thus claim a longer record of service and a wider experience in the conditions of the Province than any of the "big gun" who hurriedly jumped into the Movement after its popular success was assured. I had also travelled far more through the towns and villages of nearly every District of the Province, and had cultivated personal and organisational contact with every active unit on a wider scale than any other colleague or competitor—not excluding Mr. Gandhi himself—could hope to claim.

No wonder, then, I was charged with the responsibility of drafting the new constitution of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee in collaboration with Mr. Valabhbhai Patel in the beginning of 1921. It is, however, more appropriate to say that Mr. Valabhbhai really approved in his usual laconic terms of what I drafted with the able counsel and guidance of his more experienced brother, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, had no difficulty in recommending me as the man to be appointed as the Secretary of the new Committee, at the same time that he named Mr. Valabhbhai Patel as the natural leader and President of the organisation. Little did I then dream of finding difficulty in co-operating in a most fraternal and intimate manner with Mr. Patel. For I had worked with him with such extraordinary harmony as a co-secretary of the Ahmedabad Famine Relief Committee, where Mr. Patel had often gone far out of his way to defend some of my energetic acts of a seemingly doubtful value against the hottest attacks of some of the millionaries of Ahmedabad. Then again I had often made Valabhbhai's house my own, and even when I did not live under the shelter of his roof, I had always worked in the most intimate contact with him and cultivated an extraordinary amount of personal affection and political harmony with him. So I naturally started my work in the new organisation in a spirit of the most cheerful optimism, and set out, I thought then, in most distinguished company to win Swaraj for our Province and whole of India.

The very success of the Movement, however, brought us strange companions. The "nationalisation," for instance, of the Proprietory School of Ahmedabad brought Messrs. Thakore and Divan straight into the fold of the new educational as well as the political Movement. And while one may not doubt the sincerity of their patriotism, and the purity of their idealism, the clarity of their vision may be easily questioned. The results, however, of their entry were soon perceived. The apparent magnitude of their sacrifice and their high social, and, may I add, pecuniary position, easily served to make them the allies of Valabhbhai Patel, and served to dislodge me from the high place I had till then occupied in his esteem and confidence. And while I was already smarting under Mr. Gandhi's new order of turning schools into spinning institutions, this fateful trio presently faced me like a dead wall to frustrate all my glowing dreams of serving the poor and the

"untouchables" and carrying the torch of light into the farthest corners of rural Gujarat.

While the Bezwada programme adopted towards the end of March, asked us in Gujarat to enrol as many members and set up as many spinning wheels as possible—I do not now remember any figures prescribed on these two occasions—it also ordered us to collect fifteen lakhs of rupees from our Province as our quota towards the one crore Tilak-Swaraj Fund. Money then naturally began to pour into our office from all sides from the beginning of April 1921. Feverish attempts were also made by some provincial and all district workers to collect as much as possible toward the quota of our Province. A veritable downpour began by the end of April and the beginning of May. Popular enthusiasm, of course, ran very high. All tried to vindicate the high honour of Mr. Gandhi's Gujarat, the home of the Banias and Jains, renowned for their wealth and generosity throughout the land. The results exceeded all our expectations. For money came, not only from the British districts of Gujarat, but also from the States of Kathiawar and from the Gujarati community living far away in Madras and Calcutta, Aden and Africa, even London and Paris.

Like our new allies, however, our new wealth brought us a host of difficulties. The lonely shrine of ascetic patriotism had been converted almost overnight into a rich temple. Is it any wonder then that the new shrine, studded with gold and jewels, should be presided over by its proud high priests who would rather prefer to spend the money in honour of imaginary gods and superstitious rituals than in the real service of the poor and the down-trodden ?

While I remained generally busy with my organisational and touring work—dividing my time between the Ahmedabad office and the provincial centres—the new river of gold brought me a strange surprise. For I saw Mr. Valabhbhai Patel, our President, for the first time attending our office punctually at noon every day from the middle of April, ready to collect the money as it poured in from all sides. Not that we had not seen any money before in that office. For we had collected many hundreds of thousands in 1919, for the Famine Relief Fund, and our turnover in grain and grass had amounted to many lakhs. And while we had no millionaires to co-operate with us in our new political movement,

my friend and co-secretary, Mr. G. V. Mavalankar, was always ready at his post to carry out all the most responsible duties of the financial secretary. Mr. Valabhbhai Patel's newly kindled interest, therefore, in gathering the silver and notes and cheques at the office table at the sacrifice of his usual noon siesta, did surprise me. Presently, his other newly found companions of the educational world joined him at the desk in the afternoons and evenings, and helped him in garnering the Congress granary—while I was too busy touring round far away to learn the real needs of the people and to plan to start fresh institutions for their uplift and emancipation.

But while my friends were being flushed with pride and joy about gathering this new harvest, I was receiving the most dismal reports of famine conditions in many agricultural areas in the Province. I had succeeded by that time, with the help of my friend Mr. Gidwani, in planting about thirty or forty volunteers in the different districts of Gujarat. They constantly kept me informed about the conditions in their areas. The more backward and distant areas were still, however, ill-served. And they were precisely the areas that were my greatest care. I wanted to make my dream of all Gujarat organisation a living reality. I, therefore, spared no pains in cultivating most intimate and personal relations with local workers in the most distant and the most backward Talukahs in every district—for instance, Gogha in Ahmedabad District, Vagra in Broach District, and Jhalod in the Panchmahals. Moreover, faithful correspondents and even hard pressed villagers kept me informed about their trials and oppressions in the agency areas in the Province. My combined information then drawn from all these sources, coupled with my own personal observations, very soon convinced me of the conditions of poverty and starvation in the Bhil areas in the Panchmahals and in the Mahikantha agency. And determined to see that true to Mr. Gandhi's original formula, the new Congress organisation served the people as the new national Government of the country, I approached the Congress Executive Committee headquarters for funds to relieve the affected areas.

I was doomed, however, to my first cruel disappointment. I begged for the poor, only to be refused by the custodian of the riches! I remonstrated; I persuaded; I argued. But it was all in vain. I pleaded in the name of the great Mahatma, that the Congress having forbidden people to seek relief in distress from

Governmental agencies, was in duty bound to relieve their crying needs—such as were caused by flood or famine. But they did not seem even to recognise the principle. They considered me dreamy and fantastic in wanting the money that was being gathered in such liberal profusion from the people for the needs of the most needy of them! And they thought themselves exceedingly clever and practical when, adopting the Government slogan, they replied to me that the Congress money was to be strictly used for promoting the purposes mentioned in the Congress Resolutions.

I felt for the first time too thoroughly cut up and crestfallen. I verily realised for the first time that I was a stranger in the temple that I had so strenuously helped to build. I stood there penitent and helpless in the presence of these new men, armed with authority in the new organisation—fresh converts to the cult of patriotism, men who till only a few months ago were busy making their piles and leading a thoroughly bourgeois life, while I was making my eternal pilgrimage round the villages of our fair Province of Gujarat.

I wondered, indeed, how this could come about. Why should I find it now impossible, I asked myself, to persuade my President, Mr. Patel, willingly to sanction a few thousand rupees for the relief of the miserable peasants in some famine-ridden areas of Gujarat, when he had, so absolutely relying on my judgment and sincerity, whole-heartedly supported me in spending many more thousands for several humanitarian purposes only a few years ago ?

Evidently a new barrier has been raised between us. Collecting money raining on the Congress table—thanks to Mr. Gandhi and his propaganda in his great political movement—and influenced by the conservatives and petty-minded counsels of his new found allies, sitting at the headquarters, stationary and immobile like a great god, he increasingly tended to develop into a bureaucratic and centripetal force, charged with the onerous responsibility of guarding the people's treasure in the name of the great Mahatma. While, though I had made Ahmedabad the headquarters of all my public and political activities, I instinctively represented the centrifugal tendency and could not help indentifying myself with the needs the views and the feelings of the mass of the workers and people in the districts and villages. While the budding bureaucrats thought that

Indians should be satisfied by contributing members' subscriptions and Tilak Fund Donations and thus financially strengthening the centre, I was equally determined to see that this money was spent as soon as it was gathered for relieving the just needs, mental and material, of the people. For had not Mr. Gandhi again and again said that fat permanent funds and endowments were more of a curse than a blessing for maintaining institutions, which should really be made to live from year to year on people's subscriptions so as to render them truly responsible to the people's needs.

But while Mr. Gandhi was touring far away, and while I had many district workers to support me, I found myself in the minority of one at the headquarters. I then first realised—what had been dimly dawning on my mind for some time past—that I was verily crashing towards the parting of the ways.

The time, however, was not yet ripe for a clear breach. For the amount that was urgently required for relieving the distress in comparatively few and small areas was not very big. And after discussing this matter with my colleagues, they agreed to permit me as Secretary of the Provincial Committee, to call for a special subscription for relief in the affected areas. The response was spontaneous and liberal to a degree. Nor did I lose any time in setting up my machinery in action. I immediately got into touch with my old friends at Dohad, and sent them money and volunteers to help them in the difficult task of relieving thousands of half starved and starving Bhils living twenty and thirty miles from any railway station. In those days volunteers were also pouring on me from all sides. Failed matriculates—raw greenhorns of 15 and 17 and 19—merchants' sons who had run away from the parental home in a fit of patriotism—youths disappointed in love or studies—all flocked to the Ahmedabad headquarters. And armed with the new finances at my disposal I speedily went on sending them—with a brief note and perhaps just a little money to cover third-class train journey to their destinations—to the farthest corners of Gujarat. And it was a most thrilling and exhilarating surprise for me to see the enthusiastic readiness with which these youngsters rushed off to towns and villages, of which they had never heard before, to serve their unhappy countrymen. I thus came to direct the operation and the activities of about 80 to 100 volunteers engaged in famine and political work throughout the Province by the time that the fifth

Session of our Provincial Conference was held at Broach towards the end of May 1921.

While my difficulties with my colleagues remained practically in solution during this period, they did come up now and again to the surface. And that was when they sat tight even on the funds ear-marked for famine. But it was for a little while only. In the end they gave the overdue amounts with wry faces and unwilling hearts.

The Conference met, of course, at the appointed time. Mr. Gandhi, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Maulana Mahomed Ali, suitably graced the occasion. And for the last time, I acted as the draftsman of the Resolutions which accorded in a befitting manner with the national programme outlined at Bezwada. My special contribution again consisted in issuing a stirring appeal for inviting young men to volunteer in the service of the nation. Everything passed off without a hitch, and I returned to Ahmedabad in supreme coufidence that I would presently be able to dot the entire country-side with even more volunteers to serve the Congress and the Nation than we had done before.

It was, if I remember aright, from Broach, during one of my journeys before the Conference, that I sent my letter resigning my membership of the Senate of the National University. Though the letter was considered later at a Meeting of the Senate while I was working in a small room near by, most of the members of the Senate were pleased to rid themselves of a person who was no friend of their pet policies, and who could always secure the backing of a minority, however small, to harass and shake them out of their snug dovecots of comfortable orthodoxy.

XXXVIII

MY RESIGNATION

MY resignation from the Senate of the National University was destined to be the beginning of the end. My differences rapidly widened into a sharp and irrevocable breach.

I again proved foolish enough to take the Congress Programme in a practical and over-zealous spirit. The Congress at its Nagpur Session had resolved to wipe out the taint of "untouchability" from Hindu Society. Mr. Gandhi was preaching morning, noon and night that Swaraj would never be attained while the caste Hindus treated sixty or seventy millions of their brothers and sisters as pariahs and outcasts. While his whirlwind propaganda was undoubtedly having its influence with all ranks of our society, it was apparent to me that practical and strenuous measures would have to be devised to raise the educational and social status of the "depressed" classes. Thinking in terms of Gujarat then, I was easily convinced that we were in honour-bound to spend at least some of the money, that we were busy collecting from all quarters, for the uplift of our unfortunate brethren. And infected by the general spirit of quick decision and prompt action that then ruled over the land, I presently placed before my colleagues a modest scheme for starting a small number of schools and boarding-houses for the children of the "depressed classes," the backward classes (like Dharalas and Kaliparaj) and the Bhils of the Panchmahals.

Nor was I totally unqualified for this work. As in the matter of famine so in this educational work in general and of the "depressed" classes in particular I could already claim a measure of experience. At the first Session of the Gujarat Political Conference held in Godhra in 1917, a proposal to start a school for the depressed classes had been put forward and carried. And though not connected myself with the organisation of this institution I took advantage of the precedent to appeal for funds for a similar purpose at the second Session held at Nadiad in 1918. The fund, generously subscribed to by some rich friends from Bombay and

Ahmedabad, was placed in my hands, and the school that I had then started in my native town had already made satisfactory progress by 1921. I, therefore, desired to build on the foundations already laid in the two districts of Gujarat. My intermittent Relief Work again among the eternally starving Bhils of Dohad and Jhalod, had convinced me of the urgent necessity of covering the area with some permanent educational colonies, if their general position was to be really bettered and protected against the ravages of nature and the oppression of the officials. My consistent tours again in some parts of the Kaira, Ahmedabad and Surat districts had further proved to me the desirability of starting boarding-houses in backward areas for carrying on movement of uplift and purification among the people whom extreme poverty had driven either to outbreaks of lawlessness or degraded to the lowest depths of personal slavery.

But my colleagues of the Congress Committee were now too furious and impatient with me even to listen to my proposals. They put on airs of righteous indignation as they fumed and fretted over the impudence of my fantastic designs. They could not understand how any experienced and responsible officer—as I undoubtedly was—could propose to spend even a paltry sum of ten or twenty thousand rupees even from the total collection of 15 lakhs, for carrying out what was considered by them to be purely social and humanitarian work at a moment when the nation was engulfed in the throes of an unparalleled political agitation! They also resorted to cheap logic chopping and hair splitting distinctions. While they admitted that we were committed to the policy of removing the ban of "untouchability" they seriously thought that all they had to do for the purpose was to advise people, time and again, to treat the pariahs as their brothers, and to admit them into their schools, their houses and even their temple. In a word, they thought that they could satisfy their consciences by publishing a few pamphlets and by making a few speeches on the subject. But when it came to spending even a penny out of the vast sums that they were collecting night and day from the people for the benefit of its most aggrieved section, they raised their hands in horror, and their anguish was unspeakable!

I turned away in sorrow and despair—sorrow over the early grave of my cherished dreams—despair over the future of the Congress organisation and movement. I would, however, not take my defeat lying down. I was resolved to do what I dared to plan. Having successfully planted many institutions even before the new Congress Committee was born and the new leaders had flocked so hurriedly round the national standard, I decided to plant my pet institutions on my own responsibility. I presently got into touch with my friends, Mr. Banker and Anasuyaben, who harboured feelings of chagrin and resentment against Mr. Patel and his new found allies. No sooner than did they hear of my plan then they volunteered to advance rupees 5,000 to me to begin my work. For they felt convinced that Mr. Gandhi was eventually bound to compel the recalcitrant custodians of his treasures to pay out every penny of the money that I spent for such an admirable cause. And I quickly began to set up my own independent office, and to find qualified and able teachers for starting my first set of schools in selected places.

News of my impending breach soon began to be hummed among the circles of our leading workers in Ahmedabad. Principal Gidwani felt most anxious about it. He, therefore, decided to make up an earnest attempt to compose my difference with my colleagues. With this end in view, he addressed a circular to most of the leading educational and political workers to invite them to small meeting at the National College. We gathered on the appointed date. I quickly found that the good Principal had unwillingly sought only to strengthen the hands of my executive colleagues with the reasonable support of educational "experts" from Mr. Gandhi's Ashram. For the discussion presently centred round my scheme of organising schools and boarding-houses for the backward classes. While my colleagues still continued to demur on financial grounds. Mr. Gandhi's "experts" presently came to their aid with spacious arguments about want of sincere teachers and workers fully qualified to work in such institutions. I must point out, however, that some of those very "expert" friends had often privately confided to me the urgent need of starting such institutions against which they were now racking their brains to find lame excuses. I, on my side, stated my case fully and clearly. My purpose, however, was to draw out n full measure all the plans of the other side. I was anxious to

see if they had at last been induced to make a beginning, however, slight and halting, in the direction that I indicated. I was, however, disgusted and ashamed beyond measure to see how the political "leaders" and the pious "experts" cheerfully agreed with one another on the inadvisability of spending even one farthing out of the millions collected from the people for the cause of the poor and the down-trodden. At last I got up, and as I silently walked to the door, Mr. Valabhbhai Patel asked me—

"Do you then agree with us?"

"Yes," I replied, "I agree that you are not prepared to move an inch in the matter, but . . . ."

"Is there any 'but' then?" queried Mr. Patel.

"Of course", said I. "For I am then all the more determined to carry out my plan and work single-handed".

"Oh!" moaned Mr. Patel, "So all this Conference has gone in vain. Sit down please and let us talk it over again".

"All right", said I.

And I again humbly sat down in the midst of my older friends to listen to their words of wisdom. But we could only argue in a circle. There was no escape.

"Do you mean to say then," Mr. Patel asked me in a somewhat indignant and impatient manner, "that all our combined views count for nothing to you, and that you are bent on working your way in spite of the views and wishes of all of us assembled here ?"

"I regret" I firmly replied, "my complete inability to follow you in this matter. For my own independent experience leads me to a conclusion exactly contrary to yours".

So the last effort for rapproachment between me and my colleagues ended. And though I continued to be the Secretary of the Provincial Committee—and even of District Committee and of the Reception Committee that was by that time organised to arrange for the forthcoming Session of the Congress at Ahmedabad—I was a lonely man in the midst of the old surroundings.

Next morning I started work in earnest. Within two months I brought into being at least one boarding house and half a dozen schools, from distant Dohad at one end to far off Lathi in Kathiawar at the other. I even succeeded in securing the entire sympathy and goodwill of some veteran workers, like Mr. Phadke (Mama) of the Godhra School, and my old friend Mr. Thakkar who was universally respected as an authority on the Depressed Classes question. And though I was soon prostrated by a dangerous illness, I continued to correspond with Mr. Gandhi on the subject, and even secured his promise to give full consideration to the subject as soon as I saw him personally.

But a few weeks had hardly elapsed since the meeting at the National College, when a graver and more urgent issue served to drive even a deeper wedge between me and my colleagues. For the month of June was already on, and yet there were no signs of rains in our Province. Touring round as usual I discerned signs of conditions getting worse everywhere. I saw the grim ghost of hunger and starvation stalking alike among the proud red-turbaned patidars of Vagra, and the half-clad Bhils of Jhalod. Luckily, I was then touring in company with my friend Mr. Lakshmidas, the Khadi expert. He helped to correct and largely corroborate my impressions. Reinforced by his worldly wisdom, I planned out the necessary measures of Famine Relief, and despairing of inducing my colleagues to spend a penny, I hastened to Bombay to approach Mr. Gandhi himself, in the second week of June, for the necessary funds.

I had no difficulty in seeing Mr. Gandhi at his Gamdevi residence in Bombay. I pleaded as my excuse for troubling him the critical need of the poor and the urgency of relief. I was glad to see that he still reposed implicit confidence in my judgment inspite of my difference with my colleagues. And I had hardly spoken for five minutes before he took his own decision. He immediately telegraphed to Mr. Valabhbhai Patel asking him to convene a special meeting of the Executive Committee, as he would himself travel down to Ahmedabad with me that very night.

The meeting was duly held next evening in the Provincial Committee's office. Mr. Gandhi was present. The members were present in their full strength to hear and consider my

plans. Mr. Lakshmidas was there to give his moral support to me. I then reviewed once again the bad situation in many areas of Gujarat, and placed my budget of expenditure under different heads totalling the colossal amount of about rupees 117,000. My words were listened to in complete silence. My critics and adversaries were stung and exasperated with bitter resentment, but they dared not utter a word in the presence of the great Mahatma. Mr. Gandhi alone spoke. He said that the Committee could best discharge its functions by passing the budget in the very terms in which I had placed it, and that I alone should be personally authorised to spend the amount and to submit accounts to the Committee. The Committee then adopted the budget and reposed the entire power and responsibility in me. It also decided to issue a special appeal to the public to subscribe towards the Famine Fund.

I thus added one more string to my bow. While I had already began to spend private money on my own responsibility for providing schools for the "depressed" classes and aboriginal tribes, I now actually began to draw funds on a very extensive scale from the Provincial Committee itself, and to spend them in my own private office for carrying on extensive relief measures throughout the Province. It was indeed a day of proud victory for me. But my friends, cut up and mortified beyond measure by Mr. Gandhi's intervention, could never forgive me afterwards for what they called "my audacious impudence" and decided to be more vexatious, harsh and critical in their conduct towards me than ever before.

Luckily for us, there were abundant rains in July, all over the Province, and my relief measures were then automatically suspended. But I had already spent about 86,000 rupees (out of which nearly Rs. 60,000 had been subscribed in the special fund) on the different heads of grain and grass relief, and my colleagues were anxiously waiting to raise a hornet's nest about my ears as soon as I submitted my accounts to them. They already began to make a fuss about the reappropriations that I had made under different heads, though I had kept within the total amount sanctioned to me. But they could not dare to challenge the honesty and integrity of my financial statement. For luckily enough, forewarned of the impending storm of criticism, I had armed myself with the

able assistance of my friend. Mr. Nandalal Shah, who conscientiously and diligently supervised my office work while I was touring in the Province. Thus my colleagues could not find one slip in the accounts; they were so neatly supported by vouchers and receipts on every point, and so they had no option but to adopt them without being able to indulge in the slightest official criticism, even though the accounts were compiled and submitted in the January following, owing to preoccupations with the Congress Session.

While I thus apparently succeeded in carrying out the full measure of my plans regarding the education of the backward classes and the relief of the stricken areas, I had travelled many miles away from my carping conservative colleagues. Under the cloak of pursuing pure politics and the ever-widening programme of the Congress, they had set up a new red tape and a fresh bureaucratic machine. Sitting, therefore, in my new office, and ploughing my lonely furrow, I quickly perceived that the gulf that yawned between us was deep and unbridgeable. Having done, therefore, everything in my power to set up the foundations of the Provincial organisation, I now saw no alternative but to cut myself off from it since it had come completely under the power of my colleagues.

So even at the risk of blotting out my entire political career, I boldly decided to resign at one stroke my triple Secretaryship of the District Committee, the Provincial Committee and the Reception Committee at the forthcoming Session of the National Congress.

The big Hall of the Social Reform Association was packed to overflowing in August, 1921, where the meeting of the Provincial Committee had assembled to hear the great Gandhi himself on the burning politics of the day. My triple resignations were presented there in due course by my colleagues Mr. Mavalanker. Then Mr. Valabhbhai rose to speak. He referred to my sterling worth as a friend and a colleague in the most moving terms. As he spoke tears began to glisten in his eyes. Nor could I restrain mine as I sat in the midst of the big assembly. I felt that I was cutting myself off from those men and associations that had been hallowed and rendered sacred to me by time. But

as Mr. Patel himself said the differences between us were deep and fundamental. Then Mr. Gandhi wound up the subject in his own choice manner. The Great Mahatma was generous indeed in paying a high tribute to my sterling worth. So the tragedy was complete. The cup of my misery and humiliation was full, and I left the meeting abruptly with my eyes brimming with tears, as I had to take a train for Bombay to undergo a major operation next morning.

XXXIX

BURN FOREIGN CLOTH.

WHILE Mr. Gandhi was merrily going round the country collecting his crore, the temper of the down-trodden people was rising day by day. The country, excited over the prospect of soon getting Swaraj, was seething with discontent. And the sporadic outbursts of violence that occurred in different parts of the country closely followed as usual by an orgy of Government repression, served to indicate the volume of popular excitement and resentment that Mr. Gandhi was trying to drain away into spinning activities and the collection of millions of rupees.

Malegaon, a small town in the Bombay Deccan, was the scene of one of these natural disturbances. "While the country was engaged in this constructive work," writes Babu Rajendra Prasad, "there occurred a riot at Malegaon, in Nasik District, resulting in the death of several policemen, and also some of the mob, and acts of incendiarism. There was also disturbance at Giridih in Behar, in which, however, there was no loss of life." Mr. Gandhi, of course, condemned these outbursts of violence in his usual style, and used them as suitable pretexts for preaching afresh his gospel of non-violence. No Congress Commissions, however, were set up to inquire into the economic or political causes of these disturbances. Nor were they considered sufficiently important to warrant any suspension of the Movement.

Presently more serious happenings were reported from Chandpur. "Early in May, 1921, there was Labour trouble in the Tea Provinces of Assam" (writes Babu Rajendra Prasad in his introduction to YOUNG INDIA) "on account of low wages, and a great exodus of about 12,000 coolies from Tea Gardens, amidst scenes of great disturbance and suffering, and there was an attack on these coolies at Chandpur (Station) where they had been congregated in large numbers, by Gurkhas who had been drafted there by the Government. The news of this outrage caused great indignation in the country, and led to a sympathetic strike among

the railway and steamer employees in Eastern Bengal, which created a complete deadlock for nearly two months".

We have already seen how Mr. Gandhi condemned these sympathetic strikes. And this in spite of the fact that no less a leader than Deshabandhu Das, the lion of Bengal, took the matter very seriously, and not only devoted a large part of his time for carrying on a tearing propaganda for these unfortunate victims of a bloody massacre, but also felt compelled to spend the largest part of the money collected by him as Bengal's contribution to the Tilak fund for the relief of the strikers. And yet how did Mr. Gandhi view it? Did he seize on this opportunity to go deep into the economic grievances of the unfortunate coolies who were condemned by the neglect of politicians and the cupidity of the British planters, to a veritable system of slavery? Or did he, at any rate, treat it as one of the results of the British exploitation of India and bring it before the National Congress—which was indeed duty bound to identify itself with the interests of the down-trodden coolies?

No. Mr. Gandhi did nothing of the kind. Writing so late as the 8th June about a trouble that really started at the beginning of May, he covered the whole thing with pious phrases and seemingly socialist outpourings. "I have purposely refrained," he wrote, evidently with a view to apologise for the unconscionable delay in dealing with the matter, "from dealing with this trouble, though I have remained in touch in Mr. Andrews and others, who are on the spot dealing with it." The ubiquitous Mr. Andrews was, of course, there almost first in the field, trying to keep intact the interests of the British planters. And Mr. Gandhi consoled his conscience by listening to this padre—the veritable pillar of British capitalism in India. But he wrote about this subject only to disown entire responsibility for it. "I refer to the trouble," are his words, "only to state that I knew nothing of its coming. I should be sorry if anybody used my name to lead the men to desert their employers (in this case the British planters.) It is admitted that it is a purely Labour trouble." Of course, he then threatened, in the course of the article, to destroy "every English or Indian interest that is based on injustice or proud force or is antagonistic to the growth of India as a whole." He also denounced the unconscionable dividends that did not bear any relations to the wages of the workers. But

he wound up his sermon by expressing a pious hope that. "The Capitalist, be they European or Indian, will appreciate the new awakening and the new force that has arisen in our midst."

He, in fact, tried to segregate and localise the Labour trouble instead of mobilising the entire force of the Congress for helping Labour which was, on his own showing, neither strong nor enlightened enough to fight its battles against the all-powerful capitalists.

Undeterred, however, by the ugly happenings at Malegaon and Chandpur, the apostle of non-co-operation took the first opportunity to see the new Viceroy, Lord Reading, at Simla. Of course, as he himself has explained, not because His Excellency invited him to see him. but because "His Excellency mentioned to Pundit Malaviyaji and to Mr. Andrews that he would like to see and hear my views." Then "I explained as fully as I knew the three claim—the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj—and gave him the genesis of non-co-operation." Incidentally, Lord Reading asked Mr. Gandhi at this meeting to persuade the Ali Brothers to apologise for delivering certain speeches which in his opinion breathed of violence adding that if they did not do so he would prosecute them. Mr. Gandhi immediately undertook to get the brothers to tender their apology of which so much was heard at the time. And Mr. Gandhi concluded his article on the subject (YOUNG INDIA, 25th May, 1921) as follows:—

"Some may think with me that a mutual understanding is in itself no small gain. Then, in that sense. the interview was a distinct success."

One need not stress the importance of this interview unnecessarily. It is, of course, perfectly legitimate for the leader of even a Non-co-operation Movement to interview the greatest dignitaries of the State. The fact, however, remains that it was Mr. Gandhi who sought the interview or getting an inkling of the Viceroy's desire to see him. The interview, therefore, is important as an indication of the fundamental ideology of Mr. Gandhi. As he stated elsewhere, be was longing to bring about "real hearty co-operation between Englishmen and Indians"—as he is now trying to secure partnership between a "free India and England within a British

Commonwealth of Nations". It is, however, more pertinent to observe that Mr. Gandhi about this time was already seeking an avenue for negotiations with the Government. He thought that the people of India had already shown sufficient indication of their strength so as to lead the Viceroy to lend a willing ear to his proposals for reform. Lord Reading, however, evidently turned a deaf ear to the clever diplomacy of Mr. Gandhi. And so nothing came out of this interview, except the apology which only postponed the incarceration of the Ali Brothers by a few months.

True, however, to the original programme of non-co-operation enunciated by Mr. Gandhi in May 1920, Maulana Mahomed Ali proceeded to exhort his Mohammedan and incidentally all his countrymen to adopt the third stage of withdrawing from the police and military services of the Government. I have already pointed out that this part of the programme was already overdue at Bezwada. While Mr. Gandhi, however, preferred to soar among Utopias, Maulana Mahomed Ali kept his feet firmly planted on mother earth. He, at any rate, did not lose sight of the realities of the political struggle, and refused to be satisfied merely with the prosecution of Charkha programme. And as I will presently show it was really the backwardness of the Congress that brought down the vials of Government wrath on Maulana Mahomed Ali and other Khilafat leaders for adopting the Resolution that might otherwise have not attracted much attention.

"On the 8th July the All-India Khilafat Conference," writes Babu Rajendra Prasad, "opened in Karachi with Maulana Mahomed Ali in the Chair. While reiterating the Muslim demands,— the Conference also passed the Resolution declaring it "unlawful for any faithful Mussalmans to serve from that day in the Army or help or acquiesce in the recruiting". The Conference for the moment passed off quite successfully, and most of the Khilafat leaders then came down to Bombay to attend the first meeting of the All-India Congress Committee elected under the new Constitution adopted at the Nagpur Congress.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gandhi had successfully collected his crore by the end of June. No sooner, however, was the Bezwada programme thus fulfilled than Mr. Gandhi hastened to publish his new campaign of boycotting foreign cloth by burning it in big bonfires.

Once again, be it noted, he hardly gave anybody time to think. Nor did he himself appear to think in terms of intelligible reasoning or political militancy. In fact, he appeared to be sliding. under the stress of deep emotion and nervous tension and extraordinary energy, by insensible stages into the condition of a megolomania suggesting one extravagant plan after another. In fact, the greater surprise his new suggestion caused, or the more abnormal did it appear, the more heartily it was acclaimed as a piece of saintly wisdom and political genius. No wonder, then, that his new programme of burning piles of foreign cloth—launched again without reference to any other leadership or to any meeting of Congress organisation—caught the imagination of the people by its very striking novelty, and served to postpone the day for realistic struggle against the Government.

" It is needless to say," wrote Mr. Gandhi (in support of his new programme in YOUNG INDIA, 6th July) "at this time of the day that the proposed boycott of foreign cloth is not a vindictive measure, but is as necessary for national existence as breath is for life. The quicker. therefore, it can be brought about the better for the country. Without it Swaraj cannot be established or retained after establishment. It is of the highest importance to know how it can be brought about even by the first day of August next. (As Swaraj, as originally intended by him, was to be achieved by the first August, 1921).

He then elaborated the following recommendations for arriving at the boycott as quickly as possible.

"1. For the mill-owners to regulate their profits and manufacture principally for the Indian markets.

2. For importers to cease to buy foreign goods (meaning of course foreign cloth.)

3. For the consumers to refuse to buy any foreign cloth and to buy khadi wherever possible.

4. For the consumers to wear only khadi cloth, mill cloth being retained for poor who did not know the distinction between Swadeshi and Pardeshi.

5. For the consumers to use, till Swaraj is established and khadi manufacture increased, khadi just enough for covering the body.

6. For the consumer to destroy Pardeshi cloth as they would destroy intoxicating liquors on taking the vow of abstinence, or to sell it for use abroad, or to wear it out for all dirty work or during private hours".

To the question—"Why burn?"—he replied that burning cloth (I) revives black memories and is a mark of shame, the East India Company having forced it on us, and is an emblem of slavery; and (2) the poor should not be given these, for they ought not to be dead to patriotism, dignity and respect".

We need not at this date discuss very seriously this extraordinary advice of making bonfires of foreign cloth. For like the boycott of Courts and Schools, this part of Mr. Gandhi's programme of 1921 has now practically gone by the board. In fact, the boycott of foreign cloth has been further narrowed down to boycott of British cloth during recent years, and has been more effectively carried out by picketing all foreign cloth shops on an extensive scale. It is, however, interesting to note that Mr. Gandhi himself left the poor, as he called them, free to buy mill-made cloth, though he gave a wrong reason for it. It is not because of their ignorance, but because of their poverty that they cannot buy khaddar. (And the poor in India form the vast majority). Mr. Gandhi professes that khaddar is produced for the poor. But we may be sure that khaddar will only be the luxury of the richer classes and the bourgeoisie, while the poor, who ply the spinning wheel on a miserable pittance of a few coppers a day must necessarily clothe their ill-fed bodies with cheaper machine-made cloth.

It is also true that while this programme was devised as a political weapon to hit the British merchants on the one hand and to promote spinning activity on the other, it really helped most the mill-owners of India, who could raise their prices and clear their over-laden stocks in a phenomenally short time. The mill-owners, at first surprised and shocked by Mr. Gandhi's continued insistence on the spinning wheel, soon recognised in him their firmest friend and strongest ally.

Though they have never agreed to identify themselves with the Congress programme, they have been glad of Mr. Gandhi's indirect way of promoting their interests. And as since 1919 Mr. Gandhi has never championed any struggle of factory labourers against their Indian employers, he can be rightly called the champion of the Indian Capitalist classes.

XL

BONFIRE IN BOMBAY

THE first Meeting of the newly appointed All-India Congress Committee was convened on 28th July, 1921, to register duly the programme already launched by the Mahatma at the beginning of the month. Having myself been elected a Member of this Committee I came down from Ahmedabad to attend its meeting. My own experience, re-counted before, had made me now sceptical and almost cynical towards the pompous show of this Committee. The appearance, therefore, of the members all clad in spotless white khaddar could not possibly send me into ecstasies over "the ideals of plain living held up before the country by the simple life of the Mahatma". For I knew very well that most of the Members of this Committee were ex-lawyers of business men or men of leisure—all men of means who did not have to think of their bread and butter from day to day. Their coarse home-spun dress, therefore, did not represent the simplicity of their life. I also knew that most of these well-fed and well-groomed leaders chose to confine their ideals of simplicity to their outward attire; they did not disdain to drive about in cars or to enjoy other luxuries of life. Nay more, I had already by this time seen self-conceit, haughtiness, insolence and even mean personal aggressiveness stalking about in this new livery of patriotism. And I was now disposed to agree entirely with Mrs. Sarojini Naidu when she warned students of the National College at Ahmedabad, at the beginning of that year, to hear in mind that even hypocrisy might masquerade in khaddar while humility might be dressed in silks.

In fact, looking round the big hall at all these controllers and disposers of the big Congress fund of one crore of rupees, presided over by the Mahatma himself, I really felt as if I was in the pretence of a new religious order—such as India has produced from time to time in her long history—than in a political gathering. And who does not know how even the best religious orders initiated by the most pious of saints have always a tendency to degenerate into cliques, coteries and cabals of pious frauds and hypocritical

humbugs, who must continuousiy exert their subtle intelligence to explain away their vices as virtues.

When the Committee settled down to work, Mr. Gandhi, of course, made his inevitable statement on the general situation. He presently produced a sheaf of Resolutions that had been recommended under his own guidance by the Congress Working Committee. And strangely enough the Committee did not unfurl the banner of Swaraj, or give orders for the last stage of the struggle, even though Mr. Gandhi's one year was practically over. While everybody still continued swear by this fanciful year of Swaraj—which was now implicitly shifted to the 1st January, instead of 1st August—and while eonsiderable satisfaction was expressed about the progress of the Congress propaganda, nobody appeared to be in a hurry to strike the last shattering blow at the citadel of bureaucracy.

Instead, the Committee spent a great deal of time in considering thoroughly ancilliary and subordinate issues. One Resolution for instance, "noted with satisfaction the growth of public opinion on the campaign against the use and sale of intoxicating liquors or drugs by peaceful boycotting, and warned the Government that in case of continued improper interference with peaceful boycotting it would advise its continuance in disregard of such orders". And even still greater importance was attached to the proposed boycott of H. R. R. The Prince of Wales, who was expected to arrive in India during the next winter. The Committee, therefore, "passed a Resolution declaring that it is the duty of everyone...... to refrain from participation in or assisting in any welcome to the Prince of Wales. While tendering this advice the Committee placed on record its opinion that India bears no sort of ill-feeling against the person of H. R. H. and that the advice is tendered because the Committee regards the proposed visit as a political move calculated to give strength and support to a system of Government that has resulted in breach of faith with the Mussalmans, and atrocious injustice to the people of India, and the system that is designed to keep India as long as possible from her birthright of Swaraj".

After indulging in such puritanical and political platitudes, the Committee set its seal of approval on Mr. Gandhi's projected

campaign of boycotting and burning foreign cloth. "After congratulating the nation on carrying out the Bezwada programme, the Committee asked it to concentrate its attention upon attaining a complete boycott of foreign cloth by the 30th September (within 2 months) and the manufacture of khaddar by stimulating hand-spinning and hand-weaving, and advised all persons belonging to the Congress to discard the use of foreign cloth from the 1st August, and all Congress organisations to collect foreign cloth from consumers for destruction or use outside India". The Committee also invited the mill-owners to co-operate with the Congress, or to support the national effort on the lines suggested by Mr. Gandhi.

Lastly, the Committee felt compelled to deal with the proposals for forward action. But strangely enough, it mixed them up with pious regrets over some untoward happenings in different parts of the country. So the Committee prefaced its resolution on this most important question by expressing its sorrow over "the excesses at Malegaon and in Aligarh, even though under great provocation, and advised Congress organisations to inculcate non-violence as an essential part of non-co-operation, and congratulated the people upon their exercising complete restraint notwithstanding great provocation by local authorities in Dharwar, Motihari, Guntur and other places". And the same resolution "while taking note of Government repression and of the reasonable desire of the workers to take up civil disobedience, held that civil disobedience should be postponed till after the completion of the Swadeshi programme, which it regarded as a test of the measure of influence attained by the Congress, and a guarantee of the stability of non-violent atmosphere. It, however, authorised the Working Committee to sanction Civil Disobedience in any place or Province".

While the Committee adopted such a halting and half-hearted Resolution regarding Civil Disobedience—which represented, indeed, the fourth stage of the original programme of non-co-operation—it did not lend even a belated support to the Resolution adopted by the Khilafat Conference at Karachi only a few weeks ago, calling for withdrawal from the police and military services of the Government (which represented the third stage of non-co-operation). The Ali Brothers and other Khilafat leaders were also present at

the Committee Meeting. But they did not press for the most outstanding achievement of the Karachi Conference under pressure from Mr. Gandhi. And it is perfectly obvious that the Karachi Resolutions would have been interpreted by the Government in an altogether different light if they had been immediately re-inforced by the Congress Committee and been warmly and enthusiastically acclaimed all over the country.

So Mr. Gandhi once again preferred to roam round his pe constructive programme and in skirmishes with a secondary evil like the drink traffic, or such an accident like the visit of the Prince of Wales, than lead a direct and bold frontal attack against the system of the Government. The "Leader" of Allahabad had rightly accused him of suspending non-co-operation when he announced the Bezwada programme. The accusation could be even more justly brought home to him now at the end of July, when hardly any time was left to make good his promise of getting Swaraj in one year. And this inspite of the fact that even more pressure was brought to bear on the Committee to authorise Civil Disobedience and non-payment of taxes in view of the increasing repression resorted to by Government all over India.

The fact, however, is that Mr. Gandhi's own view of Swaraj and non-co-operation had been undergoing a radical change during the year. He himself made his so-called confession of erorr in YOUNG INDIA of 18th August, 1921, when he wrote: "It would have been better to have insisted on hand-spinning as a necessary part of the educational item in non-co-operation"; and that: "I invite those who share my belief to hasten to repair the *mistake*, and earnestly take up the work of the production of yarn and khadi in all national institutions which they influence". This so-called confession of error is really sought to cover a radical revolution in his own philosophy of the spinning wheel. As I have pointed out before, Gandhi came to believe in the sovereign value of the spinning wheel, not only as a means for getting Swaraj, but also as a sign of non-violence: in fact, an indispensable symbol of the ideal order of a peaceful, fearless and self-reliant society that he desired to establish in India. So the re-orientation of the people of India on these lines seemed to him to be equivalent to the establishment of Swaraj as he thought it impossible for any foreign power to dominate such a society for any length of time. And while Bezwada gave him

money but did not succeed in setting up a sufficient number of spinning wheels, he now sought to further his pet scheme by advising the more spectacular method of staging huge bonfires of foreign cloth in every market place in India.

On the other hand, it should have been quite obvious from an objective point of view that not even the complete boycott of the thirty million pound worth of British cloth by producing all necessary cloth in India could destroy the domination of British Capitalism and Imperialism which counted its gains in India alone at many hundreds of millions of pounds every year. But none would dare to challenge the sacred cult of Charkha, as none would be bold enough to question the possibility of getting Swaraj in one year !

So big preparations were already on foot for staging the first big bonfire in Bombay, as soon as Mr. Gandhi had given the orders. And Congress volunteers and workers—and even the unfortunate students of the National Schools and Colleges in Bombay—were summarily ordered to collect piles of foreign cloth from palaces of the rich, the flats of the middle classes and even from the tenements of the poorer classes. European suits and hats, collars and ties, came in for the severest condemnation. All foreign fineties of women, and even the simplest articles of men's attire made of foreign cloth came to be denounced as symbols of slavery, as the livery of the foreign masters. So every street, in nearly every locality, came to be besieged by a group of volunteers carrying away huge heaps of this accused and sinful cloth, in victorias and lorries and even hand carts. The propaganda waxed from day to day. Mr. Gandhi used to appeal in his most theatrical manner for articles of foreign dress, as he used to appeal before for money and ornaments. And the volunteers, as well as the general population, got so enthusiastic over this sporting propaganda, that we used even to see animals, like horses, oxen and donkeys, dressed up in foreign fineries specially in hats, collars and ties, with a view to degrade their value in popular esteem and to compel the fashionable folk to deliver them up most readily and cheerfully.

A vast concourse, numbering many hundreds of thousands—most of them dressed in white khadi clothes—gathered together on the 31st July in the large compound of the late Mr. Umar

Sobhani's Mills at Elphinstone Road, to behold the ceremony of lighting up the first and perhaps the biggest bonfire. Most of the All-India leaders who had come to attend the meeting of the Congress Committee were present. Mr. Gandhi arrived punctually to time, and after making a short speech on the sanctity of the function that he was about to perform, set the pile of the costly silks and precious suits ablaze. "If anybody had any doubt", wrote Mr. Gandhi in YOUNG INDIA (11th August) "as to the necessity and the practical value of burning foreign clothes, those who witnessed the ceremony at Mr. Sobhani's yard in Parel must have had their doubts set at rest. It was a most inspiring sight, witnessed by thousands of spectators. And as the flame leapt up and enveloped the whole pyramid, there was a shout of joy resounding through the air. It was as if our shackles had been broken as under. A glow of freedom passed over that concourse . . . And it was as well that it was no rags that were burnt, for some of the finest saries, shirts and jackets were condemned to the blaze."

The next day—the first of August—was observed both as an anniversary of the death of Mr. Tilak, as well as of the beginning of the Non-co-operation Movement. Again, hundreds of thousands of men and women gathered together on the Chowpati beach where a huge platform was erected in the centre for Mr. Gandhi and other speakers. But the multitude was nearly as countless as the sands on the beach, and the Meeting proved entirely unmanageable, as no loud-speakers were provided. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, contented himself with paying his tribute to the memory of the great leader whom they had all gathered to honour at the very place where his mortal remains were consigned to flames.

Could Mr. Tilak, however, have dreamt that a sum as big as one crore of rupees would be collected in his name for the achievement of self-government—and then be spent largely on the fanciful project of setting up primitive spinning wheels? He was a thoroughbred modernist in his industrial outlook, and never believed in the vagaries of the Charkha cult. As a realistic politician he had ceaselessly harped on the boycott of British and not of all foreign cloth and goods. And yet Mr. Gandhi had not hesitated to use his name—obviously with a view to placate the unbelieving minority hailing from Mr. Tilak's Province—to collect his pile and to spend it on his visionary project.

And so the Movement went on! For what Bombay did to-day, all India did on the morrow. And thousands of young men and students were kept busy for many weeks collecting cart loads of foreign clothes—only with a view to make spectacular bonfires. And I had the melancholy pleasure of seeing the precious energy of the most promising youths in my Province, and specially in the city of Ahmedabad, being frittered away on this ridiculous project of achieving freedom from British yoke by burning their cloth. Mr. Gandhi thought that such blazes served to break our shackless asunder. The shackless, however, remained. All that the people really burnt was their own just resentment and revolutionary ardour, which could have been far better utilised for mass organisation, and for speeding up the struggle.

XLI

GANDHI DONS LOIN-CLOTH!

WHILE Mahatma and his lieutenants were thus regaling themselves with bonfires of foreign cloth all over the country, a more serious "fire" broke out during the month of August in Malabar on the south west coast of India for several months. in was the Moplah rebellion that could not be suppressed, even with all the military forces of the British Government.

"On August 19th the Moplahs of Malabar broke out in an open revolt. The immediate cause for the outbreak was the attempted arrest by the District Magistrate of some Khilafat workers at Tirurangadi. The Moplahs, however, seemed to plead great provocation in the shape of ruthless repression of all legitimate activities. The Moplahs not only resisted the arrest, but broke out in open rebellion, at first against Government, but subsequently against the Hindu population as well. There were innumerable cases of looting Hindu houses, forced oonversion and unmentionable atrocities on the Hindu population as a result of Moplah ignorance and fanaticism. The Muslim public were naturally unwilling to believe these, and at least one or two Muslim public men almost condoned these". (YOUNG INDIA, page 1158).

While it is true that the fanaticism of the primitive Moplahs was first excited by the arrest of some of their leaders, it was no doubt turned afterwards against the Hindus on account of deep-seated economic cause. For in Malabar, as in many other parts of India, the Hindus are the landlords and money-lenders, while the bulk of the exploited tenants and labourers are Muslims. The half-starved, down-trodden Mussalmans of these areas, therefore, always harbour resentment against the economic oppression of the rich Hindus. And the source of the trouble can never be really cured till a programme of economic and social amelioration of the exploited peasantry is vigorously launched to equalise conditions in such areas.

Mr. Gandhi and Congress, however, could not afford to look deep into these matters. For that would place a most inconvenient strain on the sentimental unity that he sought to create between the Hindu and Mussalman bourgeoisie. Burying, therefore, his head like an ostrich in the sands of moral phrases, Mr. Gandhi wrote an article in YOUNG INDIA of 6th September—"condemning Moplah violence and pointing out that violence is an obstacle to success. Replying again, to a correspondent from Scotland on the meaning of the Moplah Rising, in YOUNG INDIA (20th October, 1921) he served out a most exalted homily to the Hindu cowards and the Muslim bullies. He even went to the length of advising the cowardly Hindus to learn to defend themselves even by resorting to physical violence. "The Moplah Revolt," he wrote, "teaches another lesson—that each individual must be taught the art of self-defence . . . . I want both the Hindus and Mussalmans to cultivate the cool courage to die without killing. But if one has not that courage, I want him to cultivate the art of killing and being killed rather than in a cowardly manner to flee from danger". And writing again on the subject in YOUNG INDIA of 26th January 1922, Mr. Gandhi while sympathising with the Hindus, pointed out that non-co-operation was self-realisation and that the Hindu must develop sufficient strength of will to withstand brute force and die in the act if necessary.

He, however, naturally felt the necessity of going to Malabar in company of the Khilafat leaders, with a view to pacify the Moplahs. After, therefore, finishing his tour in Behar, Assam and Madras during the month of August, he started with Mahomed Ali for Malabar from Calcutta. He was, however, not permitted by the Government to follow his plans, and Mahomed Ali was arrested in the train at Waltair, on the 14th September 1921, under a District Magistrate's warrant, and re-arrested on the 17th September under a warrant from Karachi. As Government really sought to penalise all the leaders who had been responsible for the famous Karachi Resolution, they speedily arrested Shaukat Ali at Bombay, Dr. Kitchlew at Simla and even His Holiness Shree Shankaracharya, the great religious leader of the Hindus.

The arrest of Mahomed Ali at Waltair, however, had a strange re-action on Mr. Gandhi, Describing the incident in YOUNG INDIA (22nd September 1921) he sought to console the

Mussalmans and to cheer up the people with the following amazing reflection: " This imprisonment, therefore, may safely be regarded as a preliminary to the establishment of Swaraj. Only the Swaraj parliament can unlock the jail gate and release the brothers and their follow prisoners with becoming honours. For this is a fight to the finish". Yet the fight still drags on after 11 years!

A still stranger re-action was to follow in a few days. For while his heart was torn with agony and his soul was burning with resentment at the arrest of his beloved colleague, somebody explained to him the difficulties of getting all the hand-spun and hand-woven cloth necessary for making even the simplest apparel of dhoti, shirt and cap. Suddenly an inspiration came to him, deep down from his burning soul, that the poorest in the land can indeed economise and yet be patriotic by putting on a piece of cloth just a few inches wide to cover their loins. Then it occurred to him that if the idea was practicable why should he not himself set an example to India? And why should he not put on the loin-cloth, even to demonstrate to the whole world, as no other symbol can, the appalling poverty of India's starving millions? No sooner thought than done. And from that day Gandhi began to put on the loin-cloth, which his recent sojourn to London has now served to make famous throughout the whole world.

But a forceful Government Act, like the arrest of the leaders of the Karachi Conference, naturally called for more drastic political action. The supreme responsibility first devolved naturally on the Khilafat leaders, as Government had based their action on the Resolution of the Khilafat Conference. On the 21st September, therefore, "the Central Khilafat Committee and the Jamait Ul Ulema met at Delhi under the presidentship of Hakim Ajmal Khan, and resolved to reprint the Fatwa (a religious Decree issued by five hundred of the most respected Muslim Divines, forbidding all pious Mussalmans from serving in the civil or military service of the Government) for distribution, and to repeat the Karachi Resolution. Hundreds of meetings began to be held everywhere, where the Karachi Resolution was repeated word by word by each member of the audience". But such meetings and Resolutions were only deemed by Government as a novel form of protest against the arrest of the Karachi leaders. And any hopes that the Khilafat leaders might have entertained of courting cheap martyrdom, were thoroughly defeated by the immobility of the

Government, who did not deem it necessary to fortify its dignity by arresting the leaders *en masse* or prosecuting the innumerable attendants of their meetings.

Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders then hurried to repair the omission of which they had been guilty at the last meeting of the Congress Committee. As late as the 4th of October a Manifesto was issued by Mr. Gandhi, and about fifty other prominent Congressmen, to state, in view of the prosecution of the Ali Brothers, that "it is the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to or remaining in the employ of the Government in the civil or military department". After thus basing their whole manifesto on the principle of freedom of opinion, the signatories proceeded to state "that it is contrary to national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian, and more especially as a scldier, under a system of Government which brought about India's economic, moral and political degradation, and which has used the soldiery and the police for repressing national aspiration, as for instance, at the time of the Rowlatt Act agitation, and which has used the soldiers for crushing the liberty of Arabs, the Egyptians and Turks and othsr nations who have done no harm to India. We are also of opinion that it is the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and to find some other means of livelihood".

The Working Committee of the Congress then met at Bombay immediately afterwards, on the 5th October, and practically confirmed the Manifesto issued on the previous evening, and advised a voluntary *hartal* on the day of the landing of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, and the boycott of all public welcome throughout his visits to the different cities of India. All this Resolution again was duly approved by the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi on the 4th of November.

All this was as it should be. Curiously enough, however, neither Mr. Gandhi nor his adherents in the Congress or in the Khilafat organisation took the Resolution seriously. It is difficult to say whether the Ali Brothers themselves desired to carry out their Karachi Resolution by mobilising all the forces at their command to carry on an intensive propaganda among civilians and soldiers to persuade them to resign their Government services

The Congress again, when it met at Bombay after the Karachi Conference, signally failed in its obvious duty of supporting this Resolution—which formed indeed an integral part of the third stage of Mr. Gandhi's original programme of non-co-operation—and to lay down lines of nation-wide propaganda in order to give an effective challenge to the Government. One would have expected that the arrest of the Karachi leaders on this account would have compelled Mr. Gandhi and his colleagues to concentrate all their energies on this most vital part of the political programme, instead of frittering them away in a spectacular boycott of the Prince of Wales. They, however, chose to satisfy themselves with mere protests and threats. While Mr. Gandhi continued to "claim the right to tell the soldier face to face what is his duty in accordance with (YOUNG INDIA, 6th October, 1921) his opinion," neither he nor his organisation took any effective steps whatever to enforce that claim. No wonder, therefore, that the Government treated these protest meetings as huge jokes!

The Karachi Resolution and the arrest of the Ali Brothers gave a first class political opportunity to Mr. Gandhi and the Congress to pass their Movement of non-co-operation further to a decisive conflict between the people and Government. In fact, they had already committed themselves to this critical stage of non-co-operation from the very start. And yet when the golden moment presented itself they all shirked and hesitated to face the issue. It can even be asserted that, inspite of their flamboyant protests, they beat a hasty retreat. While they had tried to carry out to the letter their Resolutions of collecting one crore of rupees and boycotting foreign cloth, they did not trouble themselves in the least to see that even one civilian or soldier resigned from Government service. Neither the Government offices nor the barracks were sought to be picketted. No passionate appeals were distributed either among the police or the military. And after doing everything to raise the political passion of the people to the highest pitch, Mr. Gandhi once more side-tracked them from the real political issue to the opportunist boycott of the casual visit of the Prince of Wales. Once again he preferred a theatrical demonstration to read a real political conflict and diverted the energies of the nation into a false and frivolous course, which was providentially open out to him by the folly of the Government.

XLII

TOWARDS PEACEFUL REBELLION!

WHILE Mr. Gandhi was setting vast quantities of cloth ablaze in different parts of the country, he did not fail to realise that he would be very soon called upon to start a more serious kind of conflagration. The Apostle of non-violent non-co-operation had indeed tarried too long over pompous preparations and pious rituals. But the sands were running out; there was no more time to lose. For the limit of one year even according to the new reckoning was to expire in the next few months. He must, therefore, either denounce the nation as a set of laggards, or he must lead it to the final struggle for victory. As he had chosen up till now to boost its performances, and to overlook its deficiencies, he was now expected on all hands to give the word for the final battle.

Of course, the nation did not carry out complete boycott of foreign cloth even by the 30th September. Neither had it carried out a complete boycott of Schools or Courts. Nor did the Congress succeed in enrolling one crore of members or in set time twenty lakhs of spinning wheels at work. Mr. Gandhi was, however, disposed to be quite reasonable in such matters. He could easily accommodate high precepts with poor performances. Apparently all that he sought was the creation of moral opinion and general, mental and emotional upheaval. And as the country went on celebrating the holy sacrifice and discarding foreign clothes from city to city and from village to village, he felt the urgent necessity of setting out a new programme of individual as well as mass disobedience, to mark the final stage of the holy war.

Nor did his extraordinary ingenuity fail to set up a connection —which might be deemed extremely comical if it were not seriously meant and gravely acted upon between the adoption of the new khaddar dress and the campaign of Civil Disobedience. And he presently succeeded in convincing himself and to all appearances his followers that the wholesale adoption as well as the production of khaddar were indispensable for every individual or locality to qualify them to embark on Civil Disobedience,

While he began his campaign as usual on the platform and in his papers, he began to test and inspire the most devoted of his workers in private discussious. As individual workers and leaders had been already arrested in different parts of the country, individual Civil Disobedience had already been bereft of much of its romance. Still Mr. Gandhi began to prod all leaders and workers of the first rank with inconvenient questions on their individual production of yarn. It was not sufficient that we should organise spinning. It was now brought home to every one of us—to the ablest and most energetic propagandist—that spinning was a *sine qua non* for entering on the final struggle. Many of us unfortunately had forgotten to spin ourselves, while we had been most energetic in carrying on spinning propaganda, and had been even rewarded with many garlands of hand-spun yarn. So Mr. Gandhi's cross-examinations put us on our mettle, and inspired us with a fanatical zeal to spin every day, even at the cost of propagandist activity, if we were to enjoy the coveted honour of heroic martyrdom in the last stage of the struggle.

No man, woman or child, indeed, was immune from these embarrassing questions during this period. Men and women, rich, influential and patriotic but not of the Congress persuasion, began to flock round Mr. Gandhi in ever-increasing numbers. Young boys and girls, from schools and colleges, children of rich mill-owners and other plutocrats, loved to draw out the great Mahatma in a battle of words. But while the mill-owner was questioned ruthlessly about the origin and history of even his turban cloth, Mr. Gandhi did not hesitate to embarrass even his fair visitors by inconvenient questions about the texture of their fine cotton and silk saries. And he always amused even when he did not succeed in instructing them when he spoke to them of the divine joys of the spinning wheel.

But presently emphasis was more heavily laid on the most difficult yet the most romantic question of offering mass Civil Disobedience. None of us quite knew what Mr. Gandhi meant by it. Mr. Gandhi himself had never practised it before. For while he had led many campaigns of Civil Disobedience in big and small areas they had been generally restricted to one law or a certain set of laws. But the great Apostle now told us that Civil Disobedience meant nothing more and nothing less than complete political outlawry and civil resistance of all un-moral laws, fiats and

ordinances of the Government—thus reducing the Government to a huge joke! And as he instinctively decided to launch out in only one out of the two hundred and fifty districts of India—or to be more correct, in one Taluka of one such district—a most extraordinary kind of rivalry was presently set up between the leading workers of the different Talukas in Gujarat to qualify themselves fully for the privilege of offering the Mahatma his Kurukshetra for waging his Dharma Yudha—Holy War—against the Satanic Government.

Nor did the expert of non-co-operation fail to evolve his amazing technique for leading such a fight. He set out the requisite conditions in YOUNG INDIA (3rd November, 1921) in the following terms:

"Civil Resisters must implicitly believe in the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity, based not upon expediency but upon real affection. Civil Resisters must believe in Swadeshi, and, therefore use only hand-spun. Humanly speaking, though, if not even one out of the two hundred and fifty districts of India is thus ready, I consider the attainment of Swaraj during this year nearly impossible. If one district can be found where (1) ninety per cent. of the population have completely boycotted foreign cloth, and are manufacturing all the cloth required by them by hand-spinning and hand-weaving; (2) if the whole of the population of that district, whether Hindu or Mussalman, Parsee or Sikh, Christian or Jewish is living in perfect amity; (3) if the whole of its Hindu population is purged of the sin of untouchability; (4) and if at least one in every ten of its inhabitants is capable of suffering, imprisonment or even mounting the gallows; and (5) if while that district is civilly peaceful and honourably resisting the Government, the rest of India remains non-violent and united and prosecutes the programme of Swadeshi, I hold it to be perfectly possible to establish Swaraj during this year".

These conditions had, as a matter of fact, been already communicated in private discussions to all the leading workers. It was, of course, evident that Mr. Gandhi alone was fully qualified to lead such a struggle personally, as he alone had evolved its technique and could instinctively form his judgment on the most vital questions that would arise during the inevitable conflict with Government. It was further understood that he would lead such

a struggle in some part of Gujarat, as he could bring home his great message to every man, woman and child in the Gujarati language. And as three out of the five districts of Gujarat were deemed out of the question for such a struggle, the district workers of Kaira and Surat began to make the most strenuous attempts to clothe their pet Talukas of Anand and Bardoli respectively with all the necessary qualifications set out by Mr. Gandhi for the mass struggle.

Having once again taken the wind out of the sails of the Congress, Mr. Gandhi duly convened its meeting on the 4th of November at Delhi to set its seal of approval and endorse almost word for word the programme he had already set out in YOUNG INDIA. After endorsing the Resolution of the Working Committee regarding the duty to Government services, whether civilians or soldiers, the Committee passed another Resolution "authorising every Province on its own responsibility to undertake Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, subject to the conditions that—

1. In the case of individual Civil Disobedience, the individual must know hand-spinning, must have fulfilled the part of the programme applicable to him, must be a believer in the unity of all communities and in non-violence as absolutely essential, and if a Hindu, must show by personal conduct that he regards untouchability as a blot upon the nation.
2. In the case of Mass Civil Disobedience it required the vast population of the area embarking upon Civil Disobedience to have adopted full Swadeshi, and to believe in and practice all other demands of non-co-operation.

It further laid down that Civil Resisters and their families should not expect to be supported out of the public funds, and it authorised the Working Committee to relax the condition in suitable cases".

It was an open secret in Delhi that while the Resolution was drafted in the most general terms so as to promote Mass Civil Disobedience in any part of India, it was really meant formally to authorise Mr. Gandhi to start the campaign in some part of Gujarat and preferably in Bardoli.

Mr. Gandhi elaborated the technique of the new struggle in an article on the "Momentous Issue" in YOUNG INDIA of the 10th November. "With illustrations of partial and individual Civil Disobedience the country has become familiar. Complete Civil Disobedience is rebellion without the element of violence in it. An out and out Civil Resister simply ignores the authority of the State. He becomes an outlaw claiming to disregard every unmoral State law. Thus, for instance, he may refuse to pay taxes, he may refuse to recognise the authority of the State in his daily intercourse, he may refuse to obey the law of trespass and claim to enter military barracks in order to speak to the soldier. He may refuse to submit to limitations upon the manner of picketing and may picket within the prescribed area. In doing all this, he never uses force, and never resists force when it is used against him. In fact, he invites imprisonment and other uses of force against himself".

To those who might be struck with the futility of such self-immolation, Mr. Gandhi addressed the following reflections:

"He is endeavouring to compel the State without committing a moral breach to arrest him. Thus considered, Civil Resistance is a most powerful expression of a soul's anguish and an eloquent protest against the continuance of an evil State. Is not this the history of all reform?"

Finally, after warning the Provincial Committees against hasty embarkation on the plan of Mass Civil Disobedience, he in fact asked them to obey even oppressive and vicious Government orders—except in the matter of Swadeshi—while he was leading a struggle in an area of his own selection! "But in all other respects," he wrote, "in so far as I can judge at present, it will be best for every other part of India scrupulously to respect all orders and instructions whilst one part is deliberately taking the offensive and committing a deliberate breach of all the unmoral State laws it possibly can. Needless to add that any outbreak of violence in any other part of India must necessarily injure and may even stop the experiment. The other parts will be expected to remain immovable and unperturbed even though the people within the area of experiment may be imprisoned, riddled with bullets or otherwise ill-treated by the authorities".

Having thus set out the most impossible preliminaries as indispensable for qualifying an area to resort to such a passive rebellion. Mr. Gandhi set out a still more impossible condition to prevent the rest of the vast population of India from resorting to such a rebellion. If, however, this rebellion could be restricted, according to his wishes, to a small Taluka inhabited by one or two hundred thousand persons out of the three hundred and fifty million people of India, it would indeed be all that the Government would want. For nobody in his sense could possibly believe that any modern Government, much less the British Government. could possibly be compelled to surrender to a rebellion, however successful, that is confined to an infinitesimal part of the vast country. In Mr. Gandhi's own words, therefore, his movement could only serve as "a most powerful expression" of India's agony, and "an eloquent protest against the continuance of an evil State, and the demonstration would, in due course, be followed by personal negotiations with the Government which would duly end in some reforms and concessions. It could, however, bring about neither a revolution among the people, nor a fundamental revolution in the system of Government.

Nor is it easy to understand what earthly connection there could possibly be between such full-fledged adoption of the Swadeshi programme and the capacity of a people to suffer and to sacrifice in the fight for freedom. Of course, to Mr. Gandhi by this time Swadeshi, which had become synonymous with khaddar, was not only a symbol of economic freedom, but also of moral and even political efficiency. Above all, it represented to him in a tabloid form the essence of non-violence and organisational perfection. But to those who look at it from an objective view-point, it is quite clear that the temporary khaddar activity of a few months standing set up by a band of workers, however brave and diligent, could never compare with any organisation of the mass of the peasants and labourers themselves solidly based on their own day to day economic and political interests. For, after all, what Mr. Gandhi contemplated was in effect a strike of a few hundred thousand farmers and tenants in a small agricultural area, and the success of such strikes has been always known to vary with the strength and the solidarity of the organisation of the striking people.

But all these mundane and realistic views were foreign to Mr. Gandhi. He has by temperament and by long established habit adopted the apriori and intuitive method as an approach to the solution of all problems. And while the limitations and the conditions of the struggle were as usual lost sight of, his warlike thunderings and his heroic battle cries now served to render the whole atmosphere of India thoroughly electrical. Expectation was raised to the highest pitch, and the country waited with bated breath and reverential awe for the next moves of the Mahatma. He would presently inaugurate the holy war on his chosen battlefield and would catch the ear and the eye of the entire world by his fight for the freedom of his vast, historic land.

XLIII

RIOTS AND REPRESSION

THE war was declared but the cup of a complete victory was dashed from Mr. Gandhi's lips by an accidental mob outburst.

"On the 17th November, H. R. H. the Prince of Wales landed in Bombay where he was received by Princes, Officials, Europeans, Eurasians, Parsees and other rich persons. On the other hand, the middle and lower classes boycotted the welcome. Mobs got out of hand and began to molest visitors to the Reception. From small beginnings the riots assumed large proportions; mobs burnt tram-cars, smashed liquor shops and even molested some Parsee ladies. Mahatma Gandhi, who happened to be in Bombay holding a Meeting in another part of the town, rushed to the scene of the occurrence to quieten the mob," (Babu Rajendra Prasad, Introduction to YOUNG INDIA).

And this is how Mr. Gandhi described the situation after visiting the scenes of disorder:—

"The reputation of Bombay, the hope of my dreams, was being stained yesterday, even whilst in my simplicity I was congratulating the citizens upon their non-violence in the face of provocation……Little did I know that at the very time that the Prince was passing through the decorated route and the pile of foreign cloth was burning in another part of the city, the mill hands were, in criminal disobedience (mark the word 'criminal') of the wishes of their masters, emptying them first one and then the others by force, that a swelling mob was molesting peaceful passengers in the tram-cars, and holding up the tram traffic; that it was forcibly depriving those that were wearing foreign caps of their head-dress, and pelting inoffensive Europeans. As the day went by, the fury of the mob now intoxicated with its initial success, rose also. They burnt tram-cars and a motor, smashed liquor shops and burnt them too……… I heard that there was firing resulting in deaths and that in the Anglo-Indian quarters everyone came in for hard beatings if he did not put off his khaddar cap or shirt. I heard that many were seriously injured, I am writing this in the midst of six Hindu and Muslim

workers who have just come in with broken heads and bleeding, and one with a broken nasal bone, and other lacerated wounds and in danger of losing his life".

So the masses of the Indian people, conscious of their power and numbers, sought forcibly to prevent the "loyalist" communities from welcoming the Prince of Wales. The Europeans and the Anglo-Indians, assisted by the police and military, indulged in savage reprisals. Such an outbreak would have been considered perfectly natural and normal in Europe. Clashes between Nazis and Communists in Germany, between Irish Free-Staters and Orangemen in Ireland, between the Civil guard and the Labourers in Spain, are considered here natural results of the deep-laid antagonism between opposing factions, Not so, however, Mr. Gandhi, who had made non-violence a *sine qua non* of his political movement.

"Thus the hope of reviving Mass Civil Disobedience," continued Mr. Gandhi," has once more, in my opinion. been dashed to pieces. The atmosphere for Mass Civil Disobedience is absent. It is not enough to say that such an atmosphere is to be found in Bardoli, and therefore it may go on side by side with the violence in Bombay. This is impossible. Neither Bardoli nor Bombay can be treated as separate unconnected units. They are parts of one great indivisible whole. It was possible to isolate Malabar. It was also possible to disregard Malegaon. But it is not possible to ignore Bombay".

Nor did he hesitate in the name of the Congress to shoulder the entire responsibility for the riots, as he had done before at Ahmedabad. "Non-co-operators cannot escape responsibility......... We claim to have established a peaceful atmosphere, *i. e.* to have obtained by our non-violence sufficient control over the people to keep their violence under check. We have failed when we ought to have succeed".

As the orgy of popular riots and official reprisals went on unabated for two days, Mr. Gandhi announced a fast till the riots ceased. "I must refuse," he declared, on November 19, "to eat or drink anything but water till the Hindus and Mussalmans of Bombay have made peace with the Parsees, the Christians and the Jews, and till the non-co-operators have made peace with the

Co-operators". Peace was restored at last on the 23rd November, and at the instance of the leaders of all communities and of all political parties, Mr. Gandhi publicly broke his fast at a public breakfast. Speaking on the occasion he said he found peace only in an empty stomach as a result of the disturbance, and exhorted all not to resort to violence in the future.

Events, however, now moved too fast to permit Mr. Gandhi to lapse into peaceful and penitent quietude.

For the *hartal* of the 19th November had proved remarkably successful in all the big cities of India. Nor had it been marred by any orgies of violence as in Bombay. No shops were opened, no vehicles for hire plied, and even some public offices had to be closed because the officers would not attend for want of conveyance. But the very success of the *hartal* produced great panic among all classes of Europeans, and the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the European Association of Calcutta, made an excuse of the Bombay riots to press Government to take drastic action. The Government of Lord Reading, which had brought out the Prince of Wales inspite of the protests and warnings of the people, decided therefore to secure a welcome for the Prince at the point of the bayonet. And on the 19th November—even before the Bombay riots had run their course—the Government of Bengal declared the Khilafat and Congress Volunteers Corps and other similar bodies to be unlawful under Section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, though it had been originally passed to suppress anarchical bodies and secret societies. Similar notifications declaring voluntary organisations unlawful were issued with amazing rapidity by the Governments of Delhi and the Punjab, U. P., Assam and Behar and Orissa. In many places the Seditious Meetings Act was also applied. And the leaders of all the different Provincial Congress organisations immediately replied to the insolent challenge of Government by enrolling themselves and thousands of young men as members of the Volunteer Corps.

Meanwhile the Working Committee of the Congress met at Bombay on the 22nd and 23rd November, and directed all Provincial Congress Committees to appoint Volunteer Boards in their respective Provinces for controlling and bringing under a

uniform discipline all existing volunteer corps, and gave them draft instructions for giving effect to it. It also suggested the form of a pledge to be signed by volunteers in which non-violence, hand-spinning and the use of pure khaddar were insisted upon, and a promise made to run all risks (of life, limb and freedom) in the performance of their duties.*

Luckily, I had the rare opportunity of seeing Mr. Gandhi personally at Surat, just as he returned from Bombay after the meeting of Working Committee. After tossing about the whole night in a mosquitoful room of the Anavila Ashram, he was happy to meet the local workers of the Province in the early morning. Presently the tall form of Swami Shardhananda walked into the room, and Mr. Gandhi got up to embrace him in a hearty and affectionate manner. The Swami had come all the way Delhi to discuss the political situation with the Mahatma. An emissary of Lala Lajpat Rai was also there to receive a personal message from Mr. Gandhi regarding the all-embracing Ordinances issued by the Government. A general discussion then naturally ensued, and it became very soon apparent to me that while Mr. Gandhi tried to look fresh and cheerful, he had not yet fully recovered from the efforts of the acute pain and sorrow caused him by the Bombay riots.

Mr. Gandhi's penitent and pessimistic mood, therefore, prevented from giving any clear-cut instructions. He appeared to be more anxious to learn than to teach. He would like to bide the time. He would wait for further moves of the Government. He would not ask the Congress leaders either in Delhi or in the Punjab to give a battle royal to the Government immediately, even on the issue of the recent Ordinances, for he was nervous about the outbreak of violence. After, therefore, dictating many words of cautious wisdom and political circumspection, he naturally left the Swami as well as Lalaji free to take any action they deemed fit. For all that he could give at the moment was "wisdom from afar".

Meanwhile a number of our friends from Surat and Bardoli pressed on the Mahatma the urgent necessity of visiting Bardoli.

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*(Largely based on Babu Rajendra Prasad's Introduction to YOUNG INDIA).

For in their opinion it had now made sufficient advance to satisfy all the conditions repeatedly laid down by him. And though he had only a few days ago entirely ruled out the whole programme of Mass Civil Disobedience in view of the Bombay riots, he was now persuaded to pay his long delayed visit to Bardoli in company, be it noted, with a Muslim divine, Maulana Azad Sobani.

We will leave the subject of Bardoli for the moment and revert to the rapid development of events in the country. For "in the first week of December commenced what is known as "the period of repression". Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab, Babu Jitendralal Banerji in Bengal, and a large number of volunteers in the country were arrested for violating the terms of the notifications. Deshabundhu Das, the President-elect of the Ahmedabad Congress, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and thousands of volunteers, were also arrested presently in Bengal. Even women, including the wife, sister and niece of Mr. Das, were arrested one day in Calcutta on a frivolous charge of obstruction. Soon thousands were in jail. There was a great flutter even in moderate circles, and their recognised leaders and associations sent protests to the Government. And it verily looked as if all India were ablaze.

This news was showered on Mr. Gandhi as he returned to his Ashram from Bardoli. It invigorated and electrified him. His drooping spirits were once again roused and excited. The dismal shadows of the Bombay riots began to vanish quickly into thin air. In fact, his whole mentality underwent a sudden change, for he was immensely gratified over the fact that the Government was at last roused, though not in such a way as to recognise and appreciate the newly developed power of the Congress. At last he thought he had now come to grips with the Government!

"The arrest of Lala Lajpat Rai" (wrote Mr. Gandhi in YOUNG INDIA, on 8th December 1921) "and Messrs. Lalkhan Santanam and Gopichand in the Punjab, and Messrs. Phooken and Bardolai in Assam, Babu Jitendralal Banerji in Bengal, Maulana Mohi-ud-din and others in Ajmer, and Mr. Harkrannath Misra and others in Lucknow, means business. It shows not merely that Government is in earnest, but that it is not going to tolerate non-co-operation any longer. No longer is it a question of putting down violence, it is one of compelling co-operation. And

this is as it should be. The Government had to appear in its true colours some day or other". And he wound up the article with a powerful exhortation to the nation. "It will be a distinct sign of weakness and unfitness for Swaraj if these imprisonments dishearten or demoralise us. He is no soldier who is afraid or unwilling to pay the toll demanded of him .....I am convinced that it is not argument but suffering of the innocent that appeals both to the persecutor and to the persecuted. The nation will shed her slothful indifference and the Governors their callousness at the sight of such suffering. . . . He serves best who sufiers most".

The arrest again of Deshabandhu Das and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad which followed in a few days, put him even more on his mettle. Treating that as a direct challenge to the organised power of the Congress, he replied to it in the following militant words :

"Lord Reading" (YOUNG INDIA, 15th December 1912) "has been as good as his word. The highest in the land has not been immune from arrest. Why should the President-elect be let free if he enlisted volunteers and issued manifestos. . . . There was no cessation in the activity of bringing about *hartals* on the day of the Prince's arrival in Calcutta. It was some such reasoning, I suppose, that was applied in effecting the arrest of the President-elect. . . This must be obviously to prevent *hartal*, These arrests mean that the authorities did not want to tolerate even quiet persuasion and canvassing. They want, in fact, a forceful opening of shops ..... It is more necessary then, however, for the people now to observe *hartal* on the 24th December (the day of the arrival of the Prince of Wales in Calcutta). The honour of the leaders require rhe people of Calcutta to observe a complete *hartal* . . Our true test is certainly now. For the nation is truly awakened. There will be a ceaseless flow of women and men to led. . . Our supply must always be equal to the demand made upon them by the Government. We win when we have established sufficient credit for ourselves for being able to cope with the demand".

Nothing, however, heartened Mr. Gandhi more than the most unexpected arrests of some ladies in Calcutta. I remember his re-action very well, as I happened to be in his Ashram at the time when the telegram was received by Mr. Gandhi. His whole

temper and spirit were suddenly transformed as he read the delightful news. He felt it was too good for words. Whatever doubts and difficulties he had felt before in following a vigorous course of defensive Civil Disobedience now suddenly evaporated. And he proceeded to comment on the news in the following terms (YOUNG INDIA, 15th December, 1921):

"The women of Calcutta have obstructed the gentlemen of Calcutta by trying to sell khadi, and a telegram in the newspapers has announced that they have been consequently arrested. The company includes the devoted partner of the President-elect, his widowed sister and his niece. I had hoped that in the initial stages women would be spared the honour of going to jail.........But the Bengal Government in their impartial zeal to make no distinction even of sex, have conferred the honour upon three women of Calcutta. I hope that the whole country will welcome this innovation. The women of India should have as much share in winning Swaraj as the men. Probably in this peaceful struggle, woman can outdistance man by many a mile... .. Man's duty is clear. We must not lose our heads. Excitement will not protect our women or our country". And he concluded with the astounding words "Swaraj is within our grasp. Let it not step away from us by self-forgetfulness".

The last words are very significant. For it was well-known in the non-co-operation circles that Mr. Gandhi's life would somehow be seriously endangered if Swaraj was not obtained by the 31st December. While he knew that this stipulation was conditional and that his condition had not been fulfilled, either in spirit or in letter, he somehow made it plan to his intimate circle of friends and followers that by a process that was super-rational and inexplicable he would somehow cease to live after the 31st December—if Swaraj was not won by the date. For the Bombay riots had convinced him of the utter futility of inaugurating any great struggle in the month of December, and therefore, of wresting Swaraj from Government.

The orgy of repression, therefore, and more particularly the arrest of the Calcutta ladies—even though most of them were released within twenty-four hours—luckily released him from all these mystical or super-rational fancies and imaginings. For by a

strange process of reasoning, which it is impossible for any outsiders to explain, I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears, how he was suddenly convinced that Swaraj was "within our grasp", as soon as he had received the news of the ladies' arrest. And having thus achieved in his own opinion the substance of Swaraj within the appointed period, he now felt more free than ever to turn his back on the past and to march towards the future with a firm step and a new vision.

He now smelt, as perhaps he had never smelt nefore, gunpowder in the air. It whetted his appetite to bring his non-co-operation campaign to a dramatic finish. His heart now beat full and true. His incomparable powers of ingenious thinking and masterful propaganda, were raised to the highest pitch. The dark night of humiliating penance and excruciating doubts had vanished, and he marched with heart refreshed, with a spring in his step and with light in his eyes towards the morrow of India's freedom.

XLIV.

ROUND TABLE CONFEERNCE.

BUT a strange fate once again dogged his foot-steps. For as soon as he began to march he hurriedly jumped on the wrong side!

There are in every country a number of influential but chicken-hearted politicians who will equally stand aghast at any forward movement of the Nationalists, as at the wholesale repression by the Government. So the Moderate milksops, headed by the ubiquitons Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, flabbergasted at the sudden incarceration of political stalwarts like Messs. Das and Nehru, hurriedly waited in a deputation on the Viceroy at Calcutta, to request him to convene a Round Table Conference of the representatives of the people to make practical suggestions and recommendations to meet the gravity of the situation. The deputation asked for the withdrawal of the Notification under the Criminal Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act, and the release of the prisoners imprisoned under them. The cunning Viceroy, Lotd Reading, made a cautious reply. While he did not welcome the suggestions of these political busy-bodies he left ajar the door for further negotiations. The holy Pandit was permitted to see Mr. Das even in jail, and telegraph to Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi replied, and the telegıaphic amenities continued for some time. But as the Viceroy's whole purpose in contenancing these negotiations was to get the Congress to withdraw the *hartal* in Calcutta on December 24, so that he could give a truly royal reception to the Prince of Wales, and as no agreement could be reached by that date, the whole thing went "flop," and Government thereafter turned an absolutely deaf ear to the further solicitations and applications of the Pandit and his friends.

Before we go more fully into the course of these negotiations, we should first note how Mr. Gandhi was suddenly persuaded to view the issues before him in a completely false perspective. For, in the course of an interview that he gave to the Associated Press

regarding Lord Reading's speech at Calcutta in reply to the Malaviya deputation, he said "The immediate issue is not now the redress of the three wrongs (Punjab, Khilafat and Swaraj); the immediate issue is the right of holding meetings and the right of forming associations for peaceful purposes. And in vindicating this right we are fighting the battle not merely on behalf of non-co-operators, but we are fighting the battle for all schools of politics ....On this question of right of holding public meetings and forming associations, there can be no yielding. We have burnt our boats, and we must sail onward until the primary right of human beings is vindicated".

Thus the Government had really succeeded, in virtue of its repressive policy, in running a red herring across Mr. Gandhi's path. The whole campaign of non-co-operation had been up till then directed to the redressal of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs and the achievement of Swaraj. Then there were no Notifications prohibiting Volunteer Corps or public meetings. But just because Government had now resorted to these drastic measures, Mr. Gandhi was quite prepared to subordinate the main purpose of his one whole year's long fight to the three immediate issues of the liberty of speech, association and press. This is indeed the familiar trick of all Imperialist Governments. They seek to befog the main issue by creating a smoke screen of ruthless terrorism to put down the national fight, and unwary leaders are always apt to be caught in the net that is so cunningly spread out by their Imperialistic masters. And from this time onwards, till his efforts and negotiations had completely failed—thanks to Government's obduracy—Mr. Gandhi not only continued to restrict

the whole movement to what he called *Defensive Civil Disobedience solely aimed against the new Notifications and orders, but gratuitously offered even to suspend almost indefinitely his most important weapon of aggressive Mass Civil Disobedience, if only the Government would be pleased to withdraw these hateful Notifications and release the prisoners of his holy war.

Let me now hasten to corroborate these conclusions. Mr. Gandhi, of course, hurried to cross words with Lord Ronaldshay, and more particularly with Lord Reading, who had almost simultaneously unburdened themselves on the political situation in the country, and more particularly regarding Pandit Malaviya's proposals for calling a political truce and holding a Round Table Conference. He indeed gave it "hot" to both these dignitories in his choicest words. That was indeed as it should be. The leader of the non-co-operation Movement could not possibly be expected to surrender his position in an indecent hurry. Yet one could easily read under the foam and froth of his boiling words, Mr. Gandhi's keen desire for striking a bargain with the Government.

Writing on the Round Table Conference in YOUNG INDIA (22nd Decemder, 1921) Gandhi very nearly condemned the whole

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*Mr. Gandhi explained the difference between Aggressive and Defensive Civil Disobedience in YOUNG INDIA, 9th February, 1922, as follows :—

"Aggressive, Assertive or Offensive Disobedience is non-violent, willful Disobedience of the Laws of the State whose breach does not involve moral turpitude, and is undertaken as a symbol of revolt against the State. Thus disregard of laws relating to revenue, or regulations of personal conduct for the convenience of the State although such laws in themselves inflict no hardship and do not require to be altered, would be Assertive or Offensive Civil Disobedience.

"Defensive Civil Disobedience, on the other hand, is involuntary or reluctant non-violent disobedience of such laws as are in themselves bad and obedience of which would be inconsistent with one's self respect or human dignity. Thus, formation of Volunteer Corps for peaceful purposes, holding of public meetings for like purposes, publication of articles not contemplating or inciting to violence inspite of prohibitionary orders, is Defensive Civil Disobedience. And so is conducting of peaceful picketing undertaken with a view to wean people from things or institutions boycottod inspite of orders to the contrary".

proposition as thoroughly premature. For in his opinion "the only way we can prove our claim is by readiness to suffer in the discharge of our trust. But I hardly think we can yet claim to have given conclusive proof. In my opinion, therefore, a Conference at which the Government is represented will be useful only when the latter has tried the non-co-operators to its satisfaction and measured their strength in quantity and quality".

After thus almost completely condemning the whole affair, he ingeniously suggested a novel plan: "Since non-co-operation is a method of cultivating public opinion, I would certainly welcome a Conference of co-operators and non-co-operators: I am sure they want the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs redressed. I am aware that they want freedom for the country as much as non-co-operators. It has given me much pleasure to see almost every Moderate Journal condemning the present repressive policy of the Government . . . . And I know that if Non-co-operators can be self-restrained, do not become violent, do not abuse their opponents, every Liberal will become a non-co-operator".

He thus suggested a preliminary Conference between Non-co-operators and Co-operators, with the obvious desire of using them as mediators between himself and the Government.

But presently he went on further. He would not indeed prove deaf to the vioce of reason. He, therefore, practically delivered his terms to the Viceroy in the following words:—

"If then the Government recognised that non-co-operators mean business, and intend to suffer limitlessly for the attainment of their goal, let the Government unconditionally retrace its steps, cancel the Notifications about disbandment of volunteer organisations and prohibition of public meetings and the release of all those men in the different Provinces who have been arrested had sentenced for so-called Civil Disobedience, or for any other purpose given under the definition of non-co-operation, but excluding acts of violence actual or intended . . . . It is, therefore, the Government who have to undo the grave wrongs they have perpetrated, and *they can have the Conference they wish in a favourable atmosphere*".

The reader will not, therefore, be surprised to learn that Gandhi telegraphed to Pandit Malaviya almost in the same terms

Government was evidently prepared to go to a certain length with a view to insure the withdrawal of the *hartal* in Calcutta. Lord Reading, appears to have agreed not only to the withdrawal of the obnoxious Notifications in all the Provinces, but also to the release of the prisoners convicted under these Notifications Such a step indeed would have released most of the leaders, and thousands of the volunteers who had been arrested since the beginning of December. And it was understood that both Das as well as Malaviya were quite satisfied about signing the truce on these terms.

But then came the hitch. Mr. Gandhi insisted on the release of all other prisoners who had been convicted in the course of the Non-co-operation Movement during the whole year. He more particularly insisted on the release of the Ali Brothers and the Mohammedan colleagues, who had been punished for fathering the Karachi Resolution. But to this Lord Reading would not agree. Mr. Gandhi on his side naturally stuck to his guns. For how could he, the chief guide, philosopher and friend of the Khilafat Committee, make any compromise with Government while the most distinguished leaders of the Khilafat Movement itself remained behind iron bars. The telegrams stopped. Negotiations fell through and war was practically proclaimed afresh on the eve of the Ahmedabad Congress.

When I cautiously peeped into Mr. Gandhi's tent, pitched in the midst of the vast Congress Camp—designated Khadi Nagar, as the cloth used was hand-spun and hand-woven—Mr. Gandhi in the course of a brief conversation pointedly referred to the impasse created over the Khilafat business. I was even more interested, however, in the complete change in the mien and debonair of Mr. Gandhi. He was evidently gratified over the approaches that the Moderates as well as Government were almost compelled to make to him for peace under the stress and storm created by his Non-co-operation Movement. He was perhaps even more exhilarated to see the splendid account that the Non-co-operators were giving of themselves throughout the land. For leaders and followers were marching firmly and courageously in a solid phalanx to the steps of the jails, and though he had been worried only a month ago over the Bombay riots, no untoward incident had marred the period of the enormous sacrifice during the

last few weeks, and he felt indeed a wave of supreme joy and gratification swelling in his heart as he contemplated the extraordinary amount of enthusiasm that was being evoked by the Congress in the local populace of Ahmedabad and the whole Province of Gujarat, by the steady stream of Delegates that was pouring into the Nagar from all ends of the country, and at the vast battalion of volunteers—boys and girls—who had not only taken charge of the Congress pandal and the Nagar, but also of the entire traffic arrangements on the other side of the Sabarmati bridge.

No wonder then that Mr. Gandhi's whole attitude was practically transformed within these few weeks. Supremely confident that this wave of repression heralded the beginnings of Swaraj, he had only a few weeks ago appeared almost to postpone *sine die* the inauguration of his Aggressive Mass Civil Disobedience. And let it be remembered that he had counted on this measure of disobedience—which formed the fourth stage of the non-co-operation programme—as the infallible measure for bringing Government to its knees. And yet, he had no hesitation in writing only so late as the 8th of December, 1928, that "As soon as we have attained complete boycott of foreign cloth and begun to manufacture our own khadi in our respective Provinces and villages, we can become free people without having to resort to Mass Civil Disobedience. Therefore Aggressive Civil Disobedience should be avoided. At least till after finishing the boycott of foreign cloth and qualifying for the manufacture of hand-spun khadi".

And yet, only after two weeks, Mr. Gandhi wrote in quite a different vein. "Let it be understood that non-co-operators are not offering Civil Disobedience as they are intended to. Their insistence in calling and attending public meetings and forming peaceful volunteer associations ought not to be dignified by the name of Civil Disobedience. Non-co-operators are merely on the defensive. They have not taken, as they certainly intend to take, the offensive as soon as they are fairly certain of a non-violent atmosphere". And writing on the same day, Mr, Gandhi expressed his confirmed opinion that "the last ten days' events have shown that the people seem clearly to understand its inestimable value (non-violence)".

Thus Mr. Gandhi now prepared himself for the last struggle. He was indeed spoiling for a fight. For evidently he was

convinced that Government could only be forced to come to terms if he threatened and finally carried out, even partially, his plan of Mass Civil Disobedience, in his chosen area of the Bardoli Taluka,

Could it not also be said that whatever hesitation and compunction Mr. Gandhi had with regard to the meticulous fulfilment of his Swadeshi and khaddi programme were now dropped by him under the overwhelming pressure of the very forces that he had done so much to evoke, by his most spirited and forceful propaganda? Mr. Gandhi himself said at the Calcutta Congress of 1920 that it was not the platform that ruled over the audience, but it was the audience that swayed the platform. And the vast numbers in which non-co-operators were rushing into jails all over the country left Mr Gandhi no alternative but to prepare to sound the bugles of a final war.

The Ahmedabad Congress served only to vest Mr. Gandhi in a formal manner with the dictatorial power—which he had always implicitly assumed all throughout the year—for leading the campaign of Mass Civil Disobedience in such an area, and in such a manner as he deemed fit.

"On account of the incarceration of C. R. Das," writes Babu Rajendra Prasad, summarising the proceedings of this memorable Congress, "who was the President-elect of the Congress, Hakim Ajmal Khan was elected to preside. The proceedings of the Congress did not last long, and there was practically only one Resolution passed by it. The Congress after reforming the non-co-operation Resolution passed at its previous Sessions, called upon all, in view of the repressive policy of the Government, to quietly and without any demonstration offer themselves (as they were already doing now for the last few weeks) for arrest by belonging to the volunteer organisations, etc. .. ..It declared that Civil Disobedience is the only safest and effective substitute for armed rebellion, and advised Congress workers and others to organise individual and mass Civil Disobedience when the mass of the people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence...... . And (this is indeed the most important operative part of the Resolution) in view of the impending arrest of a large number of workers the Congress, while requiring the ordinary

machinery to remain intact…… ..appointed Mahatma Gandhi as the sole executive authority of the Congress, and invested him with the full authority of the All-India Congress Committee, and also with the power to appoint a successor in emergency, save that Mahatma Gandhi or any of his successors could not conclude any terms of peace with the Government without the previous sanction of the All-India Congress Committee to be finally ratified by the Congress, and he could not change the creed".

"A Resolution moved by Moulana Hasrat Mohani for a change in the creed of the Congress, so as to make complete independence the goal of the Congress, was thrown out by a large majority".

This summary renders two things quite clear. Firstly that Mr. Gandhi evidently thought of using his campaign of Mass Civil Disobedience as suitable lever to engage in negotiations with Government. And secondly, he was still so enamoured of the British constitution and connection that he used all this powers to defeat the logical Resolution of independence moved by Maulana Hasrat Mohani in the open Session of the Congress.

The platform was thus cleared for the final struggle. To that, therefore, we will now turn.

XLV.

MORE REBUFFS.

MR. GANDHI now fixed his headquarters in Bardoli. He assiduously cultivated close and intimate acquaintances with the leading workers, not only of the Taluka but of its small circles and even villages. His enthusiasm knew no bounds as he saw the remarkable progress that had been made in the use of khaddar; and in plying the spinning wheel in many of the important villages. Of course, he saw what the local workers under the leadership of the astute Mr. Kunverji chose to show him. And within a few weeks he hastened to convince himself and everybody else that his pet area had practically if not literally fulfilled all the qualifications that had been laid down in the famous Delhi Resolution.

On the other hand, some of us thought that Mr. Gandhi was really being duped by some workers who were anxious to secure an extraordinary glory for their great locality. The progress that appeared on the surface was quite hectic and feverish. It was more or less a nine days' wonder that had been specially contrived for the benefit of Mr. Gandhi. It was all skin deep. While people donned ponderous khaddar livery like mail armour, they quietly put it off in their daily run of life. The spinning wheels were more exhibited than used. And if used at all, they were plied by the over-worked women folk, while the men, when free from field labour, beguiled themselves with tea and cigarettes iu the public places of the villages. The so-called National Schools were farcical to the extreme, for they had not even the advantage of giving a proper education in the three "R's." while most of the spinning wheels with which they were burdened were generally out of use or produced a species of yarn that was unfit for weaving. And while people, parrot like, assented to the removal of untouchability, they neither welcomed the poor pariahs in their temples or in their homes. And Mr. Gandhi quietly and conveniently slept over the most important fact of the heinous and the most characteristic bond of slavery—not found in any other area in Gujarat—

in which one half of the population called Dublas and Kaliparaga were held by a smali minority of Brahmins, Banias and Patidars.

But all this did not matter much to Mr. Gandhi. He either did not see it or ignored it. What he was concerned with was the apparent change that had come over the entire population, and the general spirit of inflexible heroism seasoned with the quality of peace. and it is more than probable indeed that he would have inaugurated his campaign of Aggressive Mass Civil Disobedience in the area but for the last hour effort that Pandit Malaviya made once again between the Congress and the Government.

It was not difficult to read the mind of the Government at that moment. Lord Reading had categorically rejected the minimum terms of suspension of Notifications and the release of all non-co-operators and even Khilafat prisoners that Mr. Gandhi had telegraphed to Calcutta in the end of December. And Government had no more care for any settlements, as the worst had already happened and the Prince of Wales had beeu greeted with a hostile *hartal* in the streets of Calcutta. Then again "the repression policy of the Government was given full play and thousands of volunteers were sent to jail ...... The history of these months is a history of unbridled arrests and incarceration on the one hand, and of brave and undaunted acceptance of the challenge on the other. And while it could be truly asserted "that the country had given an account of itself which is one to be proud of (the total number of leaders and volunteers imprisoned very soon reached the figure of 25,000), it was quite clear that Government was determined to stamp out the entire movement of non-co-operation.

And yet, Pandit Malaviya, terrorised once again by the ruthless repression of Government and the threatened Mass Civil Disobedience of Gandhi, convened a Conference of leaders of all parties in Bombay on the 14th January 1922. Over a hundred leaders of all parties from all Provinces were present. Mr. Gandhi attended the Conference to represent the cause of the Congress.

Mr. Gandhi, no doubt, made a most impressive speech at the Conference. He recounted with masterly eloquence the

savage acts which Government had perpetrated even within the last few weeks, and about all he appealed to the Co-operators and the Moderates, to make common cause with the Congress to uphold the fundamental rights of free speech, free association and free press.

But while Mr. Gandhi could not draw a single co-operator to his side, he once again hastened to enter into a compromise with the Moderates—as a step of course, towards making a settelement with Government, even though one could hardly see the smallest particle of a desire for compromise on the part of the Government. And the concessions he made and the terms he proposed in the Committee of this Conference, may be best described in his own words (YOUNG INDIA 19th January, 1922).

"But when I was asked to mention the conditions necessary for an atmosphere favourable for a successful Conference, I had to press home certain conditions .. ...But side by side with this I observed an admirable disposition on its part to consider the Government difficulties.

"The result was a compromise. The withdrawal of notifications and the discharge of prisoners coming under the Notifications and of the *Fatwa* prisoners, *i. e.*, the Ali Brothers and others who have been convicted inspite of the *Fatwa* regarding military service or common cause... The second compromise is regarding picketing. My suggestion was that in the event of the Round Table Conference being decided upon, non-co operation activities of a hostile nature should be suspended, and that all picketing, except *bonafide* peaceful picketing, should also be suspended pending, the result of the Conference. As the implications of hostile activities appeared to me to be too dangerous to be acceptable, I hastily withdrew my own wording and gladly threw over even *bonafide* peaceful picketing, much though I regretted it.

"I agreed to advise the Working Committee to postpone general Mass Civil Disobedience contemplated by the Congress till the 31st instant, in order to enable the Committee of the Conference to enter into negotiations with the Government. This I felt was essential to show our *bonafideness*".

Thus Mr. Gandhi gratuitously went to the length of suspending his forward movement by fifteen days while nothing was forthcoming from the other side.

Nor did he fail to duly place the demands of the Congress regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj before this Conference. After re-counting the demands of the three heads that had formed the subject of Congress Resolutions more than once, Mr. Gandhi proceeded to water them down in the following words (YOUNG INDIA, 19th January 1922):

"I have heard it urged that on the Khilafat the Imperial Government is powerless. I should like to be convinced of this. In that case and if the Imperial Government made common cause with the Mussalmans of India, I should be quite satisfied to take the chance with the Imperial Government's genuine assistance of convincing the other powers of the justice of the Khilafat scheme.

"Similarly, regarding the Punjab. The principle being granted, the details have to be settled. Local difficulties have been urged about stopping the pensions of the dismissed officials. ....

" Swaraj Scheme is undoubtedly a matter on which there will be as many minds as there are men and women ....For the manner of preparing the scheme, too, I have simply suggested what appears to me a most feasible method . ...The adoption of the Congress Franchise is my own suggestion, but what I have laid down as the guiding principle is really unassailable. The scheme of Swaraj is that scheme which popular representatives frame".

Mr. Gandhi thus made his greatest bid for compromise with Government. And what he now, in fact, asked was more a moral sympathy for the Congress demands than their fulfilment in political terms. It would not be too much to say that he really desired recognition for the Congress as the most representative political party in India, and for its inimitable method of non-violent non-co-operation. Only a sympathetic gesture from the Viceroy, it would appear, and Mr. Gandhi was quite prepared to lay down his arms.

But when Malaviya presented even the most diluted and weak-kneed Resolutions of his Conference to the Viceroy, he rejected them in the most unceremonious manner.

Thus Mr. Gandhi received his second rebuff from Government by the end of January 1922. No wonder then that he now staked his all on the much advertised campaign of Mass Civil Disobedience in Bardoli, and finally delivered his historic ultimatum to Lord Reading on the subject on the 2nd February, 1922.

XLVI

BARDOLI—SATYAGRAHIS OR SLAVE-OWNERS?

LET me before proceeding further with the Bardoli campaign set down, however, hurriedly, some objective details relating to Bardoli and its people who were destined to provide, within a few weeks, front-page news to all the Newspapers of the world.

Mr. Mahadev Desai, the Secretary of Mr. Gandhi, describes Bardoli and its people in his book—"THE STORY OF BARDOLI (being the History of the Bardoli *Satyagraha* of 1928") in the following terms:—

"Bardoli is the eastern Taluka of the Surat District, containing 137 villages with an area of 222 square miles.... .It is bounded on the north by the River Tapti . . . . Two or three rivers, much smaller than the Tapti, cut through the Taluka and run into the Arabian Sea. Scarcely any of them is bridged or fordable in the thick of the rainy season. The soil in the Western part of the Taluka is rich black, yielding all varieties of crops (the staples being juvari, cotton and rice.) But the Eastern villages are wild and rocky and poor, and have a scanty water supply and an inferior climate.

"The bulk of the population, of something over 87,000, are agriculturists. One looks in vain in the old settlement reports of the Taluka for accurate figures of the population as divided into the principal communities—the Kanbis (otherwise called the Patidars) and Ahavlas (the Brahmin sub-caste) Banias aud the Kaliparaj. But according to a rough estimate over half of the population is accounted by the Kaliparaj, 11,000 being the Kaliparaj proper and 30 to 40 thousand Dublas. There is a sprinkling of Parsees and a small percent of Mussalmans. The first two communities are occupants and cultivators of the soil, the bulk of the Banyas are money-lenders and may be classed under the term Non-Agriculturists, and the Kaliparaj are the agricultural

labourers in the Taluka The Dublas, however, are a class apart and there is very little that is voluntary about their labour. *They get married at the expense of their masters, get into their debt and remain attached to their masters practically as their serfs.*

" The average village in the Bardoli Tuluka is very much smaller than a village in the Kaira District...... ...The houses of the higher classes are tiled and have a front and back door, and have large enclosures; but curiously enough the people accommodate their cattle also under the same roof as themselves".

Unfortunately, Mr. Desai omits to describe that miserable thatched bamboo huts surrounded by dung heaps in which mostly the lower classes live in the intimate company of their miserable cattle. And a truth-lover as he is, he does not deem it necessary to refer, even incidentally, to the numbers or the conditions of the untouchables who are so indispensable to the life of an Indian village.

To proceed, however, with Mr. Desai's narrative:—

" These salient features indicate nothing unusual about a Taluka. But one has to examine a little deeper to find out the distinctive features which have contributed to give Bardoli its place in the history of India.

" Quite a considerable number of Gandhiji's *Satyagrahis* in South Africa were from Bardoli, and they had during that historic struggle given enough evidence of their courage and their determination. These included Kanbis, Ahavlas and Mussalmans, who went there to try their fortune, and who have built up a considerable colony there. It was a familiarity with these *Satyagrahis* of Bardoli that led Gandhiji to approve of Bardoli as a suitable area in which to start his campaign of Mass Civil Disobedience in 1921-22".

Here again, Mr. Desai chooses to slur over the most important fact of the considerable fortunes amassed by these colonists in South Africa, and transferred to a considerable extent from time to time to their own homelands. And it would not be wide of the mark to suggest that it was the fine variety of cotton grown in the rich black soil of the Taluka, the bumper prices earned for these in good years, and the continuous remittances

pouring into the Taluka from the colonists settled in East and South Africa, that made Bardoli one of the richest, if not the richest, area in the wh ole Province of Gujarat.

After referring to the work of social and humanitarian uplift or the Kaliparaj classes— who were even clothed with the fresh appellation of Raniparaj by Mr. Gandhi at a Conference held in 1926—Mr. Desai lets out the significant fact that Mr. Narhari Parikh " was for a long time in charge of the Ashram at Sarbhon (one of the four Ashrams that were started in the different part of the Taluka for promoting constructive work after the debacle of 1922), and on one occasion fasted for seven days because the people of a village under his charge would not make amends for their cruel behaviour towards the Dublas working as their agricultural serfs." And it may be added that while a lot of activity has been promoted in recent years to carry on temperance and spinning activities among these unfortunate people, nothing has been done to snap or even relax the unique chains of slavery in which thousands of these Dublas, men and women, remain tied under the oppressive yoke of the so-called higher classes.

And it was really to the efforts, activities of progress of these higher slave-owning classes that Mr. Gandhi referred in his firsr important article on Bardoli (YOUNG INDIA, 8th December 1921), just after he paid his " much expected visit to Bardoli Taluka " in the following terms :

"It has a population of nearly 100,000, It has about 140 villages. It had about 65 Government Schools. Of these 51 have been nationalised. (This really means that most of the children attending the Government School in these 51 villages are now attending the new National Schools started in these villages). The Government Schools are continued in some cases, but have an attendance of less than ten boys. The National Schools have charge of over 6,000 children, including a few hundred girls. *And spinning is compulsory in all these Schools, though it is not yet being regularly taught or practised.* Most of the Schools have been nationalised only during the past three months.

"The majority of men were dressed from top to toe in hand-spun khadi, and a large number of women were so dressed. Those who were not, complained that they could not obtain khadi. This

does not, however, mean that the people, either men or women have given up the use of their old foreign stock. Many, I am sorry to say, still use it for domestic work.

"Much is still left to be done in the shape of the manufacture of khadi There is a good number of wheels but very few looms in the Taluka. The reader will be pained to hear that its staple crop is cotton, which has hitherto been all exported."

Mr. Gandhi forgot that the very prosperity of the people was built up on the abundant produce aud successful export at bumper prices of this high class cotton. And we may be sure that neither Mr. Gandhi nor *Satyagraha* would have found their place in the area if the people could have found money to support the new National Schools and to carry on this intensive spinning and other propaganda work.

To continue Mr. Gandhi's narrative:—

"The untouchables freely attend meetings. I have, however, suggested that it can hardly be considered satisfactory so long as the managers of National Schools do not go out of their way to bring untouchable children to their Schools, and villagers do not take a personal interest in the welfare of these suppressed countrymen. Many liquor shops are deserted".

Thus, while Mr. Gandhi dismissed the depressed classes with only two sentences, he had not a word to say about the miserable condition of the serfs and the landless labourers who constitute together half of the total population. Untrammelled, however, by such depressing thoughts, he burst out into pæans of joy over the prosperity of the cheerful slave-owners.

"The reader will be pleasantly astonished to find that all the wonderful work in Bardoli has been done by unpaid volunteers. Bardoli happens to be a Taluka in which there are few paupers, and most people (putting out of view, of course, the darker half of the population) have easy means of livelihood. The manifestation of public life is all the more remarkable on that account, and is mainly, if not entirely, due to the utterly selfless services of a band of able and enthusiastic workers, who only know to do or die".

Such are indeed the depths of self-delusion into which even a Mahatma may sink, when he has so thoroughly cut himself adrift from the realities of objective existence.

Again a political realist would wonder how on earth a body of people described as above were qualified to engage in any political conflict, even to better their own lot—let alone the lot of the whole land. But, of course, Mr. Gandhi judged them by the supreme measuring yard of the spinning wheel.

"But inspite of all this work," he concluded, "I was reluctantly obliged to give my verdict, in which Moulana Azad Sobhani fully concurred, and which was accepted by the noble band of workers, that Bardoli, before it challenged the might of a great Empire, must complete its Swadeshi programme to the extent of manufacturing sufficient hand-spun cloth to clothe itself, must freely admit untouchables into the National Schools, and must be so far non-violent that solitary unarmed co-operators, and English and other officials might feel absolutely secure in their midst. And these conditions, God willing, the good people of Bardoli have undertaken to fulfil in a few months' time."

Such an amazing process of reasoning might indeed have won for Mr. Gandhi a high title among the renowned Naiyayikas of mediæval India. But such a travesty ot reasoning could only be excused in a Mahatma by a credulous people. And even intelligent people, who laughed in their sleeves over such pious rigmaroles, chose to follow Mr. Gandhi unswervingly in the firm belief that he was destined to open out, in however quixotic and erratic a manner, the path of peaceful rebellion for the Indian people.

XLVII

ULTIMATUM!

AFTER presenting the Congress case at the Malaviya Conference Gandhi hurriedly convened a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to duly approve of the compromise that he had agreed to at the Conference. He then returned to Bardoli to make perfervid preparation for launching the campaign of Mass Civil Disobedience.

Hardly three months had elapsed since he had pronounced the people of Bardoli as not fully qualified to launch on the movement in the terms of the Delhi Resolution. Less than a year had elapsed since some of the most energetic and audacious of Surat workers had entrenched themselves in Bardoli and hurriedly attempted, with the large sums at their disposal, to introduce spinning wheels and start National Schools in this comparatively placid area. Little more than three months had elapsed since many of the schools were "nationalised", and many thousands had been summarily induced to change their usual clothes for the patriotic livery of khaddar. The atmosphere of the Taluka had no doubt been rendered a little warmer by the hot air of the innumerable speeches, and by the house-to-house propaganda that had been ceaselessly carried on during the last few months by the increasing army of local and provincial workers. Above all the spirits of the good people of the Tehsil had been sought to be roused to the highest pitch in the hope of securing the unique distinction of waging the battle of India's freedom. And now arrived Gandhi in their midst, fully armed with the desperate and inevitable determination to inaugurate his long-deferred war on the Kurukshetra of Bardoli.

Not that his mind was free from doubts. For one thing, the issue of the Round Table Conference was still in the balance. And Gandhi had undertaken to postpone his campaign at least till the 31st of January. Dismal and disquieting reports were again pouring on him from all sides, Some of his correspondents drew

ghastly pictures of the thickening atmosphere of violence in the different parts of the country. Others worried him with tales of the Congress volunteers' open defiance of Gandhi's rules and prescriptions. So, for instance, when some militant Congress volunteers took possession of a Municipal Town Hall in Jhajjar, a Tehsil town in the Rohtak District (Punjab), Gandhi lost no time in pronouncing the act as fraught with danger, and even went to the length of advising the volunteers to surrender the Hall to the proper authorities (YOUNG INDIA, January 26). Again, he deemed it fit to write a disquisition on "Danger of Mass Movement", on 22nd January, 1922. And in the same issue of YOUNG INDIA he referred in an editorial article to "A Warning Voice from Bengal," as the writer in question warned Mr. Gandhi "against countenancing a Non-payment Movement," as he thought that "precipitate action is quite likely in Bengal, as most of the leaders are in jail."

But while he continued to sound grave notes of warning Mr. Gandhi had now been deprived of all excuses and alternatives. For he had committed himself long ago to the plan of Mass Civil Disobedience as the last weapon of an unarmed nation to wrest freedom from an oppressive Government. All the previous stages had been either explicitly or implicitly exhausted. Yet instead of Swaraj, the people had earned a sheaf of oppressive orders and notifications. A new regime of terror had been inaugurated throughout the land. The most valiant and distinguished leaders of the nation—barring Mr. Gandhi and a few others—were already in jail. More than thirty thousand volunteers had been incarcerated. Thousands were being beaten and maltreated, and hundreds were being marched into jail every day. And as Government had practically rejected all offers and entreaties for negotiation and settlement, Mr. Gandhi now felt compelled by the united voice of the thousands panned behind jail bars and the, millions in the land, to wield at last his last weapon of peaceful rebellion.

Mr. Gandhi, therefore, duly convened a Conference on the 29th January, 1922, of the people of Bardoli, to consider and decide on the grave issue that faced them. Mr. Vithalbhai Patel was invited to take the chair. He was certainly not an emotional enthusiast. A little more than a month ago, after returning from the Delhi Meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, he had unburdened himself before me fully and frankly about the grave

risks of the threatened Bardoli campaign. He was even then convinced that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress had been seriously misled by a few noisy agitators of Bardoli to commit themselves to a serious decision. For he believed that the people were not yet sufficiently organised to stand the stress and strain of the inevitable regime of martial law that Government would inaugurate there in no time. No wonder then that, in Mr. Gandhi's own words (YOUNG INDIA, 2nd February 1922), Mr. Patel, the President, "addressed a Conference of the representatives of the Taluka in a speech impressive for its warning. He certainly did not mince matters."

To continue Mr. Gandhi's narrative of the Conference— "There was an audience of khaddar clad representatives, numbering four thousand. There were five hundred women, a large majority of whom were also in khaddar . . . . It was an audience of sober respectable men and women with a stake.

"I followed Vithalbhai, and went through every one of the conditions of Mass Civil Disobedience laid down by the Congress. I took the sense of the Meeting on every one of the conditions separately. They understood the implications of Hindu-Muslim, Parsee-Christian unity. (This new appellation of 'unity' was coined after the Bombay riots of November 1921, as it was found that insistence on Hindu-Muslim unity alone tended to unite and antagonise them against Parsees, Jews, Christians and other smaller minorities). They realised the significance of truth and non-violence. They saw what the removal of untouchability meant; they were prepared not merely to take into national schools but to induce untouchable children to join them; they have had no objection to the untouchable drawing water from the village wells: they knew that they were to nurse the untouchable sick as they would nurse their ailing neighbours . . . . . They knew, too, that they had to become industrious and spin their own yarn and weave their own khaddar. And lastly, they were ready to face forfeiture of their movables, their cattle and their land. They were ready to face imprisonment, and even death if necessary: and they would do all this without resentment."

Whoever heard of any serious campaign being launched on the shifting sands of such pious wishes and promises? Whatever

the value of the standards laid down by the Congress—and I certainly deem them most quixotic and sanctimonious for the purpose in view—Mr. Gandhi had certainly to see that they were fulfilled before the movement was inaugurated. It was, however, quite obvious that the situation had not appreciably changed, either as regards the fulfilment of the Swadeshi and Spinning programme, or the removal of untouchability since Mr. Gandhi gave his verdict in the beginning of December. The good people who bravely voted for the fight were hardly plying the spinning wheel. And they did not even dream of weaving the little yarn that their women folk spun. The position regarding the untouchables was even worse. Even now, on the very eve of the great struggle, the children of the untouchables were not yet assimilated in the national schools which had been started by new-born patriots. There was then no question of admitting untouchables into the Hindu temples. The prospect of untouchable women drawing water from the village wells only remained a dream. And strangely enough, none of these khadi clad patriots gave a single thought to the enfranchisement of the dark half—Kaliparaj people—of the population which was held down in shameful slavery by those who were now assembled in a solemn conclave to wage war for the freedom of India's millions.

"Vithalbhai Patel, some workers and I," writes Mr. Gandhi in that article, felt that "we would pass a Resolution postponing the decision for about a fortnight to make the Swadeshi more complete and the removal of untouchability more certain by actually having the untouchable children in all the sixty national schools". But "the brave and earnest workers of Bardoli will not listen to the postponement.......They bore down every objection raised by Vithalbhai Patel," and the Conference, therefore, adopted the following Resolution to inaugurate the much covetted campaign:

"After having fully understood and considered the conditions as essential for the starting of Mass Civil Disobedience, this Conference of the inhabitants of the Bardoli Taluka resolve that this Taluka is fit for Mass Civil Disobedience........

"This Conference hopes that the Bardoli Taluka will have the privilege to be the first for the aforesaid sacrifice. And this Conference hereby respectfully informs the Working Committee that

unless the Working Committee otherwise decides, or unless the proposed Round Table Conference is held, this Taluka will immediately commence Mass Civil Disobedience under the advice and guidance of Mr. Gandhi and the President of the Conference."

The Conference finally asked the Tax-payers to "refrain till further instructions, from paying Land Revenue and other taxes due to the Government."

So the decision was taken. Mr. Gandhi blessed it and immediately proceeded to address his memorable ultimatum to the Viceroy Lord Reading.

And strangely enough, Mr. Gandhi again proceeded to undermine, as it were, the apparently irresistible force of the Bardoli Resolution, and to wave the white flag of peace or surrender towards the Government camp. After referring to Resolutions of the Bardoli Conference and the continuous delays caused by several factors in inaugurating the momentous struggle in that area, and after also referring to the regime of "repression of a virulent type," inaugurated by Government from the beginning of December last, Mr. Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy:

"The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press. In the present mood of the Government of India, and in the present unprepared state of the country, in respect of the complete control of the forces of violence, Non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference, whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the Recommendations of the Conference. *Although in my opinion the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements as I understood them through your Calcutta Speech and otherwise you have summarily rejected the proposal.*"

After referring again to the "clear departure from the civilised policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers," Mr. Gandhi virtually surrendered his position in the matter of securing Swaraj in the following terms:

"Had the Government policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the agitation of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country, and enforced greater discipline amongst the millions of its adherents."

And once again, after imploring His Excellency to withdraw the hateful Notifications and to release the prisoners of war, Mr. Gandhi wrote:

"If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion, and shall, therefore, have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent constraint from either side, *and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands*".

Thus Mr. Gandhi would have been induced to sheath his sword if the country were restored to the same position from which if started to secure justice for Khilafat and Punjab, and freedom for the land.

Once again, Mr. Gandhi took the bait clevely cast by the Government across his path, and missed the jungle for the trees. For he betrayed an excessive and over-mastering desire to call off the entire campaign on the minor issue of the repressive policy which should have been there, and which was never contemplated by the Calcutta or the Lucknow Congress that announced the gospel of Non-co-operation, while he was quite content to leave the fundamental issue of Swaraj to the tardy process of the moulding and working of public opinion.

But while Mr. Gandhi continued to wave his pious flag, Government did not disdain to take notice of it. Of course, it

fully gauged the measure of Mr. Gandhi's weakness. But the Government of Lord Reading replied to his ultimatum by issuing a communique in which it took Mr. Gandhi severely to task for embarking on the mad folly of subverting all law and order.

So Mr. Gandhi received his third rebuff within the course of nearly one month. It was too much tor him. Nothing then remained for him but to sound the bugle of war, and call upon the people of Bardoli to embark virtually on a Civil Rebellion.

XLVIII.

SURRENDER!

BUT scarcely had the echoes of the trumpets of war died away that Mr. Gandhi suddenly called upon his army to beat a precipitate retreat.

Mr. Gandhi even despatched a thundering rejoinder to the Government communique. And on the very morrow of the publication of this rejoinder he made a sudden *volte face*. Because his pet youngest son, Devidas, telegraphed to him "Grave news of serious riots" that occurred at a place called Chauri Chaura in the district of Gorakhpur in the United Provinces.

Let Mr. Gandhi describe the tragedy:

"I understand that constables who were so brutally hacked to death had given much provocation. They had even gone back upon their word just given by the Inspector, that they (the crowd) would not be molested. But when procession had passed the stragglers were interfered with and abused by the constables. The former cried out for help. The mob returned. The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was exhausted, and they retired to the thana for safety. The mob, my informant tells us, therefore set fire to the thana. The self-imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life. and as they did so they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into the raging flames.

"It is claimed that no Non-co-operator volunteer had a hand in the brutality, and that the mob had not only the immediate provocation, but they had also general knowledge of the high-handed tyranny of the police in that district,"

The riot thus described was no doubt very serious. About ten to twelve police constables had been butchered and burnt under very ghastly circumstances,

But let us look at the other side. The mob was not controlled or directed by any Congress men or volunteers. No Congress people, therefore, could be held responsible for the outrage. The mob again, though already excited and exasperated beyond measure by the general tenour of brutal repression in that landlord-ridden province, had obviously not gathered with a view to murder the policemen. The riot was an absolutely unpremeditated event. It really represented the sudden explosion of mass fury. And even then it acted only in self-defence. The policemen would never have been murdered if they had not fired on the mob, which had all but passed by. It was really the bullets of the policemen that applied the match to the gun-powder, and brought about their own ghastly doom.

However, taking the whole thing at its worst, it could not by any means deemed more serious than the events that had happened at Malagam anp Madras, and more particularly in Bombay and Malabar. The last two places had certainly taken a much heavier toll af life. The Moplas and the military alike had shot and hacked a far larger number of men and women than could ever be enumerated in official statistics.

One should, therefore, have supposed that Mr. Gandhi would be deeply moved by the tragedy of Chaura as to postpone again by a few weeks the inauguration of his holy war in Bardoli. He would have also so firmly admonished the nation on the necessity of observing disciplined peace throughout the land, to create the necessary atmosphere for his Bardoli campaign within a very short time.

But there was one difference between the other riots of 1921 —excepting Malagam—and the tragedy of Chauri Chaura. While different sections of the population had generally engaged in a civil war in Bombay, Malabar and elsewhere, the angry mob of Chauri Chaura retaliated against the agents of Government so fully and fiercely, as no mob had done since the riots of 1919.

So Mr. Gandhi beat his own record. Or it might be said with better justice that after swallowing a number of tragedies during 1920 and 1921, Mr. Gandhi suddenly harked back to his own precedent of 1919. Somehow the news of this tragedy caused him such extraordinary and excruciating pain that he felt compelled to

call off the entire movement of militant Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience not for a few weeks or a few months, but for an indefinite period.

Having, therefore, decided under the stress of deep spiritual pain and shameful humiliation, to postpone the movement *sine die*, Mr. Gandhi forthwith convened, as usual, a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, to register his decision. The Committee met on the 11th February at Bardoli. "I put my doubts and troubles before the Working Committee," writes Mr. Gandhi, "and other associates whom I found near me. They did not all agree with me at first. Some of them probably do not even now agree with me ....They understood my difficulty and patiently followed my argument." Eventually, however, the Committee was persuaded to suspend Civil Disobedience and to call upon "all Congress organisations to concentrate their efforts on creating an atmosphere of non-violence and further strengthening the Congress organisations by improving the Panchayats and national educational institutions established under it, by enrolling members for the Congress, by stimulating the use of spinning wheels and production of khaddar, by raising the oppressed classes, by removing untouchability, and by collecting money for the Tilak-Swaraj fund to carry on Congress work. Mahatma Gandhi observed a five days' fast as a penance for the Chauri Chaura tragedy". (Babu Rajendra Prasad).

So the country was virtually asked to sheathe its sword against Government, and to engage for an indefinite period on a bunch of activities that are generally relegated to the domain of social service. No doubt such activities had been promoted before during the year. But the country took to them enthusiastically, not so much because it believed in their intrinsic value, but because they were meant to lead up to the crescendo of a civil rebellion at the end of the year. Deprived, however, of this political impetus and motive, the whole programme naturally looked quite flat and lifeless.

Mr. Gandhi fully realised this. He knew that much water had flowed down the Ganges since 1909. If the people had only been disappointed in 1919 by the withdrawal of his campaign in spite of grave and simultaneous riots in the different towns of

Gujarat and Punjab, they would now turn back on him with furious anger as he dared to call off the movement simply because a few policemen—and they were all low-paid Indian servants of the bureaucracy—had been killed in some thousand miles away from the field of action chosen for the great campaign. He, therefore, began to carry on a most vigorous propaganda for his change of front in a style which, if it lacked in militant vigour, was perhaps calculated to touch the hearts of the readers more deeply by the vein of deep personal sorrow and humiliation that he naturally imported into his vivid articles.

Mr. Gandhi virtually sought to disarm the reader entirely by beginning, his most pathetic article on. "The Crime of Chauri Chaura" (YOUNG INDIA, 16th February, 1922) in the following touching words:

"God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India the truthful and non-violent atmosphere which, and which alone, can justify mass disobedience.

"He warned me in 1919 when the Rowlatt Act agitation was started. Ahmedabad, Viramgam and Kheda erred: Amritsar and Kasur erred. I retraced my steps, called it a Himalayan miscalculation, humbled myself before God and man . ...

"The next time it was through the events of Bombay that God gave a terrible warning. He made me eye-witness of the deeds of the Bombay mob on the 17th November .....I announced my intention to stop the Mass Civil Disobedience which was to be immediately started in Bardoli......

"But the bitterest humiliation was still to come. Madras did give the warning, but I heeded it not. But God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura."

So Mr. Gandhi apotheosised the automatic and unconscious reaction of his heart as God himself, and conveyed his decision as if it was a supreme command received from the high Heaven above.

But was not the mob given sufficient provocation by the policemen to do them to death ? Anticipating such a question Mr. Gandhi replied :

"No provocation can possibly justify the brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob. And when India claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of Liberty through non-violent means, mob violence, even in answer to gross provocation, is a bad augury. Suppose the 'Non-violent Disobedience' of Bardoli was permitted by God to succeed, the Government had abdicated in favour of the victors of Bardoli, who would control the unruly element that must be expected to perpetrate inhumanity upon due provocation? Non-violent attainment of self-government presupposes a non-violent control over the violent elements in the country."

"Non-violent Non-co-operators can only succeed when they have succeeded in obtaining control over the hooligans of India, in other words, when the latter also have learnt patriotically or religiously to refrain from their violent activities, at least while the campaign of Non-co-operation is going on. The tragedy of Chauri Chaura, therefore, roused me thoroughly."

Whoever heard of hooligans who were patriotic or religious enough to do anything at anybody's bidding? Born of stark poverty and adverse circumstances they know only one law. The law of force. So Mr. Gandhi need not have shivered in his holy sandals at the dismal prospect of hooliganism running riot in India as soon as "the Government had abdicated in favour of the victors of Bardoli." For the Government machinery which the victors would have thus captured would have served to control the hooligans in future even as they have been controlled by all rulers and government throughout the ages.

And was Mr. Gandhi justified at this eleventh hour in springing on the nation, with his usual facility, quite a novel definition of the conditions of successful peaceful rebellion? All that we understood, all that we had from him before, was that Congress men all over the country should hold themselves in perfect peace while Mr. Gandhi conducted his novel experiment in Bardoli. But if he expected them to control all the forces of violence throughout the vast land he surely asked for the moon. And if the Congress had indeed attained to that high measure of organisation and efficiency as to make it an unchallenged master of all the activities

of the nation including its most unruly and turbulent elements, then surely our British rulers would have required no hint from Mr. Gandhi to abdicate within twentyfour hours.

Mr. Gandhi anticipated this objection, and even admitted its force. "I do not consider," he wrote, "Civil Disobedience impossible in somewhat imperfect conditions." He was even prepared to put up with "a certain amount of unintended violence", such as "throwing of brickbats or intimidation and coercion practised in stray cases." But when brickbats are answered by bullets—as they often are in India—the road to murder and arson is suddenly lighted up before the eyes of the oppressed crowd by the fire of the machine guns. The species of violence that shocked Mr. Gandhi in this case was, therefore, only a matter of degree. Nay more, the Mahatma who swallowed the camel of Malabar had no business to strain at the gnat of Chauri Chaura.

And if Malabar was far away, Chauri Chaura was still farther. Why should then the accidental murder of a few policemen in a solitary distant corner of India interfere with the Bardoli programme? Anticipating this question Mr. Gandhi replied:

"But Bardoli is but a speck on the map of India. Its effort cannot succeed unless there is perfect co-operation from the other parts. Bardoli's disobedience will be Civil only when other parts of India remain non-violent. Just as the addition of a grain of arsenic to a pot of milk renders it unfit as food, so will the civility of Bardoli prove inacceptable by the addition of the deadly poison from Chauri Chaura."

Such vapourings are indeed too absurd for words. India is a vast country, of the size of Europe minus Russia. And while nobody in his senses would expect all sections of the people in every part of such a vast continent to keep along one particular line of activity, nobody either would conceive for a moment the impossibility of conducting a peaceful movement, say, in the North Holland, simply because there was some riot, however bloody, in the far South of the Balkans.

But Gandhi, taking rapid strides from one self-conceived policy to another, became most self-introspective and self-critical towards

the end of his amazing article. For now it was no question of a drop of arsenic from Chauri Chaura poisoning the milk pot of peace throughout the land. It speedily dawned on the Mahatma's mind that the joke was the other way about. For now he dreamt as if the milk-white livery of khaddar only served to disguise the vast ocean of mental violence, anger and resentment that filled the whole of India from end to end. Even the holy Congress men now stood condemned in his eyes as harbouring secret wrath and vengeance against the foreign oppressors.

So he wrote: "The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index fiinger. It shows the way India may easily go if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace and re-arrange our programme, and not think of starting Mass Civil Disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained in spite of Mass Disobedience being started, and in spite of Government provocation".

Getting still deeper Mr. Gandhi asked his Congress followers to turn the light inwards and to build up the whole organisation on deeper and stronger foundations:

"As it is, the Congress organisation is still imperfect, and its instructions are still perfunctorily carried out. We have not established Congress Committees in every one of the villages; where we have, they are not perfectly amenable to our instructions. We have not probably more than one crore of members on the role. We are in the middle of February, yet not many have paid the annual four anna subscription for the current year. Volunteers are indifferently enrolled. They do not conform to all the conditions of their pledge. They do not even wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar. All the Hindu volunteers have not yet purged themselves from the sin of untouchability. All are not free from the taint of violence. Not by their imprisonment are we going to win Swaraj...... They join volunteer corps well knowing that they are not and do not intend to remain non-violent. We are thus untruthful, even as we hold the Government to be untruthful. We dare not enter the kingdom of Liberty with mere lip homage to truth and non-violence".

The Congress men, enraged and exasperated at such a homily, might well exclaim—"Et tu, Brute." Did it lie in Mr. Gandhi's mouth to say all this after he had patted the nation throughout the whole year, on the successful performance of its specific tasks he had set before it every quarter? And was he not going round the country with his eyes and ears open? And did he not know that while he continued to dream of his pious Utopia, where nothing but the twin gods of truth and peace would be enthroned, the Congress men, the young volunteers, the struggling merchants, the starving farmers and the wage-slave workers were all seething with even increasing sense of anger and resentment against the British Government under the influence of his own propaganda? And did he not see that it was only their tactical acceptance of Non-violence born of their loyalty to his great person, that prevented the people from letting out their natural feelings from expressing themselves in normal act of violence? Having, however, chosen to believe in what was not, he now felt sudden anguish at discovering something which was all the time there, and being suddenly driven to the other end of the ladder he now practically gave up all hope of embarking on an aggressive struggle and sought to console the disappointed people with the prospect of achieving Swaraj by pursuing what was afterwards dubbed constructive programme.

"By becoming truthful and Non-violent," wrote Mr. Gandhi in conclusion, "both in spirit and deed, and by making the Swadeshi, namely, the khaddar programme, complete, we can establish full Swaraj and redress the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs without a single person having to offer Civil Disobedience."

So having discovered the truth of India's temper, Gandhi suddenly surrendered himself to a monstrous tissue of self-delusion. For now, the formula of Swaraj had been rendered incredibly simple. No boycotts—except of foreign cloth—no national schools, certainly no Civil Disobedience and no No-Tax Campaign. All that Congress men and India had to do, was to spin and spin. And Swaraj would be obtained.

He only forgot that India had spun away for centuries, and yet had suffered the excruciating agonies of a series of invasions

and long periods of successive dynasties of foreign rulers. India was also spinning for all that it was worth when the Britishers came to India, and yet neither the simple common spinning wheels nor the fine muslins of Dacca and silk of Murshidabad availed us for a single second in stemming or arresting the course of British invasion.

XLIX

STORM BREAKS ON GANDHI'S HEAD.

THE suspension of the *Satyagraha* Movement, as well as the Bardoli Resolutions, were greeted with bitter irony and virulent criticism all over the land. A veritable storm broke over Gandhi's head, such as had not overtaken him before nor has since. To the common untutored mind of the masses, as well as the practical intelligence of the political classes, the incident of Chauri Chaura appeared as a dark, but a comparatively insignificant, speck on the white sky of India, and all the vast torrents of spiritual sophistry and political casuistry with which Gandhi sought to justify his decision only succeeded in evoking further criticisms, almost amounting to recriminations.

A never-ending series of thundering challenges were levelled on the devoted head of Gandhi. The whole programme of constructive work outlined at Bardoli was immediately stigmatised as 'social reform' work. Social service and temperance reform were laughed out as part of the struggle of Swaraj. Even the organisation of schools was laughed at." "What of the Khilafat?" asked the political intelligentsia. "How can this social reform work afford the necessary excitement to carry on the political struggle?" "Even the Punchayets go in for ridicule. What of the thousands of prisoners including the most distinguished leaders of the land?" And Mr. Kelkar, writing in the Mahratta, bluntly accused Gandhi of turning a somersault in the midst of a most critical struggle.

And so it went on. Gandhi, of course, started replying to these attacks in his characteristic manner. "But Chauri Chaura", he replied, (YOUNG INDIA, 23rd February, 1922), "has raised another immediate issue, *viz*: terrible penance of a fierce process of purification, and this penitential purification requires the sacrifice of the imprisoned workers, and the temporary sacrifice of many of our activities which have revived the nation. But such things happen in all wars, ***much more frequently in spiritual warfare such as ours is claimed to be.***"

Seeking to justify the "social service department," Gandhi again harped on the spiritual motive of the struggle. "If the *Non-co-operation* Movement is not malicious that department is a necessity." And he turned the sublime argument of religion nearly to ridicule in the following amazing outburst: "The vast majority of Hindus and Mussalmans have joined the struggle believing it to be religious. The masses have come in because they want to save the Khilafat and the Cow. Deprive the Mussalman of the hope of helping the Khilafat, and he will shun the Congress; tell the Hindu he cannot save the Cow if he joins the Congress; he will, to a man, leave it".

Yet did he not himself write after a few more paragraphs that: "The cause of the Khilafat, thank God, is safe in the hands of Gazi Mustafa Kamal Pasha". And was it not the grossest travesty of truth to say that the vast millions of Hindus who joined the struggle to end political depression and economic exploitation had joined the Congress only to save the sacred Cow ?

Mr. Gandhi had also no difficulty in soothing his conscience on the question of prisoners. "When I heard of Chauri Chaura I sacrificed them as the first penitential act. They have gone to jail to be released only by the strength of the people; indeed, the hope was, the Swaraj Parliament's first act would be to open the prison gates. . . The prisoners can now only gain by serving the full term of their imprisonment".

Needless to say, however, that such lucubrations brought no solace to the prisoners. The most distinguished imprisoned leaders wrote angry letters, even from behind the prison doors, accusing Gandhi of vacillation and faint heartedness. Their logic was quite clear. Gandhi should have either taken the proffered opportunity to make a compromise with Lord Reading or, on the other hand, if conscious of the strength of the masses, he chose to fight, he should have fought to the better end. In either case, the prisoners might have been released. But they could not possibly understand why taking throughout the negotiations such a high and mighty attitude, Gandhi should have beaten a hasty retreat, when he was apparently within an ace of victory.

The angry denunciations of those prisoners naturally served to add excitement to the meeting of the All-India Congress

Committee, which assembled on the 24th February at Delhi, The session was indeed a stormy one. Gandhi was faced with a hail of opposition, such as he had never met with before. "I was prepared", wrote Gandhi in summarising the proceedings of the meeting (YOUNG INDIA, 2nd March, 1922) "for a certain amount of depression, disappointment and resentment, but I confess I was totally unprepared for the hurricane of opposition". And though the Bardoli Resolutions were eventually approved of with some slight modifications, the Committee virtually passed a vote of moral censure on Gandhi.

The discussion was naturally centred on the meaning and content of non-violence. Was the principle of non-violence accepted by the Congress and embodied in its Resolutions to be generally confined to "word, intent and deed"—as laid down in the Ahmedabad Resolution—that is to say, to the external acts of individuals and masses ? Or was it supposed to reach down the deepest roots of consiousness, and to compel gentle thoughts and holy feelings on the parts of the multitude engaged in the *Satyagraha* struggle ? Apparently the vast majority of the politically-minded members took the first view. Mr. Gandhi took the second. And the discussions thus revealed once again the sharp contrast in which the practical, realistic mentality of the politicians stood against the religio-moral metaphysics of Mr. Gandhi.

"I see", wrote Mr. Gandhi after the meeting, "that our non-violence is skin-deep. We are burning with indignation . . . . This non-violence, therefore, seems to be due merely to our helplessness (of course, it is). It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity. Can true voluntary non-violence come out of this seeming forced non-violence of the weak?"

Mr. Gandhi once again begged the question. Who on earth denied that India's non-violence was due to her helplessness? It was clearly pointed out at successive sessions of the Congress that the acceptance of the non-violent programme was for the large majority of politicians, not a matter of conscience, but purely a tactical strategy. All that the Congressmen, therefore, were committed to, was disciplined and peaceful action, even in the

face of the gravest provocation. And the exceptions of Malabar and Chauri Chaura proved the rule of universal peace that had been maintained throughout India, inspite of Government's orgy of repression. For no trains had been derailed, no Europeans had been bombed or shot, no Government buildings set on fire, not even a repetition of the outrages of 1919. The Congress politicians, therefore, saw no earthly reasons why the murder of a few policemen at Chaura should serve as an excuse to anybody for suspending the non-violent war which the nation had launched.

But while the politicians rightly wanted to "deliver non-violent blows on Government" to compel it to re-adjust itself, Mr. Gandhi wanted to evolve "true voluntary non-violence" out of the apparently political conflict. Forgetting once again that there would always be a Government, whether British-India, or Indian, to control all lawless elements with the usual aid of the police and the military, Mr. Gandhi once again shuddered to think that "when the fury bursts" not a man, woman or child would be safe, and every man's hand would be raised against his fellow-being!

Mr. Gandhi thus sacrificed the political campaign on the altar of an impossible fetish of non-violence, and thus plastered his surrender with a thick coating of spiritual sob-stuff and mediæval metaphysics.

If we turn to the Resolutions adopted by the Committee, we find that after all the bombardment levelled by many members at Mr. Gandhi's position, it virtually upheld the Bardoli decisions, with only a saving clause (which never came into operation and which was never supposed to be operated) about the freedom to adopt individual civil disobedience of a defensive or aggressive character. Picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops was also to be duly shut down; and the country, while beating a hasty retreat from all political activities, was exhorted to adopt the programme of social service and khaddar spinning.

More than usual interest, however, attaches to the following clauses in the Bardoli Resolutions as they were amended by the Delhi Committee:

"Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that ryots are not paying rents for Zamindars, the Working Committee advises Congress workers and organisations to inform the ryots that such withholding of rents is contrary to the Resolutions of the Congress, and that it is injurious to the best interests of the country".

"The Working Committee assures the Zamindars that the Congress Movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even when the ryots have grievances the Committee's desire is that redress should be sought by mutual consultation, and by the usual recourse to arbitration".

Thus the Congress Committee once again put on the pious mask of non-violence to start the fight of the starving peasants of United Provinces. As Mr. Gandhi himself had explained at the beginning of 1921, the Kisan Movement was primarily independent of the Congress. The tenants were groaning under the atrocious exactions of the landlords. No wonder then, that inspired by the general militant atmosphere of the country, the miserable Kisans plucked up sufficient courage to organise themselves to carry on a firm fight against their oppressors. In these circumstances the Congress Committee might have done well to boldly espouse the cause of the tenants and wrest justice from the unwilling hands of the landlords. Instead, however, it chose to commit the lambs to the tender mercies of the butchers.

Thus, while Mr. Gandhi was rightly rebuked by many members for making a shameful surrender, the Committee itself must be held criminally responsible, not only for surrendering its judgment to the pathetic appeals of Mr. Gandhi, but also for betraying the mass struggle of the tenants at a most crucial moment in its development. It was all, therefore, a tissue of ignominious surrenders, which must cover the names of its perpetrators with undying shame.

L

ARREST AND TRIAL.

WITH the suspension of the *Satyagraha non-co-operation* Campaign, Mr. Gandhi once again became an extinct volcano.

While the All-India Congress Committee had ratified the cessation of all Mass Civil Disobedience of an aggressive as well as a defensive character, Mr. Gandhi proceeded on his own initiative to seal up all the loopholes that had been kept open by the Committee for political action and agitation. He shut down all picketing. He advised all Provincial Congress Committees to cease even individual civil disobedience of any character whatever. He did not want any big meetings. No processions. No *hartals*. No excitement. For he was convinced "that any disobedience in the present stage would be not civil but criminal."

Writing under the heading "If I am arrested," on 9th March, 1922 (the day before his arrest and incarceration), Mr. Gandhi briefly outlined for the hundredth time the new Congress programme in the following words:

"Let them remember the four pillars of Swaraj: Non-violence, Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Parsee-Christian-Jew unity, total removal of untouchability, and manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar completely displacing foreign cloth".

Now, however useful and valuable this programme might be, it was certainly not political, and whatever kind of Swaraj it might herald, it would certainly not be political Swaraj—that is, the substitution of an independent Indian Government for British Imperialism.

We were, thus, driven nearly to same position as obtained after the Ahmedabad and Punjab riots in 1919. But there was a difference. For our sense of popular violence was real in 1919, while the accidental riot at Chauri Chaura in the far North, failed

to inspire in us the same degree of fear and alarm. So while the whole country was angry and agitated at what it rightly considered Gandhi's political suicide, even his most devoted workers in Bombay and Ahmedabed were hardly moved to follow him in his semi-religious penitential campaign of instilling the doctrine of peace and non-violence in the hearts of the emaciated and down-trodden people of our Province.

The measure of Mr. Gandhi's *volte face* was brought home to me personally when I visited him at Bardoli to seek relief for the famine-stricken Bhil peasantry of the Panch Mahals district. I had, of course, never hoped for much from Bardoli. I had never been convinced by the so-called warlike preparations of that comparatively affluent area. In any event, I knew that the Movement would never have any real chance. For Mr. Gandhi would be arrested on the very day of its practical inauguration, and none else would be qualified to carry on along the idealistic lines sketched out by him. Mr. Gandhi's suspension, therefore, brought me no despair. But I was verily sick unto death when I realised the intensity of the semi-religio ethical atmosphere with which Mr. Gandhi had enveloped himself, when I went to see him at the Bardoli Ashram.

I then realised more fully than I might ever have done otherwise, that Mr. Gandhi had truly passed the zenith of his political career, and that, however distinguished a position he might continue to occupy as the titular leader of the people of India, he could never again summon forth, and still less direct effectively, the vast forces of mass-consciousness that he himself had done so much to bring into being.

How would Mr. Gandhi have retrieved his position in the political arena if he had been left free by Government? Could he have avoided a clash with the new schools of political thinking and action that his own inertia was compelling into existence? Would he have been able to stem the tide of the Swaraj party which raised the banner of fight within the Councils within six months of his incarceration? Or would he have been forced to call for some kind of energetic political action after a brief spell of penance dnd quietude ?

All these and many other questions were, however, set at rest by his arrest on the night of the 10th March, 1929, at his

Sabarmati Ashram. He was charged with sedition under Section 124A, of the Indian Penal Code, for preaching sedition and disaffection against Government established by law in the country.

Rumours of his impending arrest were naturally current throughout the whole month of February. Mr. Gandhi had, therefore, forewarned the people against any excesses, outbursts and even demonstrations in the event of his arrest. The suspension of his campaign, however, rendered all such warnings absolutely unnecessary. The people's temper had suddenly cooled down. Their hopes of the new millennium had vanished. They were once again lapsing into a somnolent attitude from which they had been roused by the clarion call of direct action. While Mr. Gandhi's arrest, therefore, suddenly raised him once again to the high position of a hero and a martyr from the low pedestal of crest-fallen leader, the event passed off quietly throughout the country.

The trial was staged at Circuit House in Shahibag, situated on the banks of the Sabarmati River some three miles from Ahmedabad city. Contrary to usual custom, this wayside place was selected for Mr. Gandhi's trial, with a view to avoid all popular demonstrations. Still the small court-room was practically overcrowded. Many of Mr. Gandhi's devoted followers from far and near came to witness the great trial. The wives and daughters of the millionaires of Ahmedabad and Bombay mustered in good numbers. Most of the vanguard of Mr. Gandhi in Gujarat, who had practically remained immune from Government repression, came to have a last glimpse of their beloved leader.

And the atmosphere thus developed by the presence of so distinguished a leader, and his friends, followers and admirers, did not fail to have an effect on the prosecuting Counsel, Advocate-General, Strangman, and the presiding Judge, Mr. Broomsfield.

The course of the trial, however, was very simple. For Mr. Gandhi, as well as Mr. Banker—who had been arrested with him as the printer of the paper, YOUNG INDIA—pleaded guilty to the charge of sedition. The interest of the trial, therefore, was

solely centred on the great statement that Mr. Gandhi was expected to make, and the sentence that would be passed on him.

After showering fulsome compliments in his usual manner on the prosecuting Counsel, as well as on the Judge, for the admirable courtesy and restraint that they had shown towards him, Mr. Gandhi read out the statement that he had brought with him from his jail abode.

"I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England", began the statement, "to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become the uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator". With this end in view, Mr. Gandhi narrated in brief the course of his career in South Africa, and then in India, and the different acts of co-operation and loyal service which he had, from time to time, rendered to Government. Coming then to recent times, he briefly alluded to the poverty of the masses and their grinding exploitation, the evils of a foreign government, the Rowlatt Act, and finally the Punjab and the Khilafat agitation.

One passage, however, in this written statement bears a semblance to the confession of a socialist. Referring to the destruction of the spinning and the weaving industry in India, Mr. Gandhi said: "Before the British advent, India spun and wove in her millions of cottages, just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cotton industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredible and heartless and inhuman processes, as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they got for the foreign exploitation, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the Government, established by law in British India, is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no juggling, no figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked

eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India, will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history".

But this vision remains one of the few cases of realistic criticism scattered in the vast and arid desert of Mr. Gandhi's pious preachings and political propaganda. And it has hardly coloured or affected in any degree the course of his political action, either before or after.

The statement finished, the Judge proceeded to pass his judgment. He had, of course, no difficulty in convicting Mr. Gandhi of the offence with which he was charged. In passing the total sentence of six months, he referred to a similar sentence that had been passed against the late Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Mr. Gandhi referred to the comparison in the course of the brief reply he was permitted to make at the end. "Since you have done me," he said, "the honour of recalling the trial of the late Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, I just want to say that I consider it to be the proudest privilege and honour to be associated with his name". And after Mr. Gandhi was permitted to bid farewell to everyone of the men and women present in the Court House, he was spirited away to the Sabarmati Jail amidst the loud sobbings and lamentations of many men and women, who had been deeply touched by the long sentence passed on the great leader.

One asks himself why the British Government, which so patiently watched and waited throughout the whole year, and more, of his vigorous propaganda of sedition and non-co-operation, suddenly found it necessary to arrest him after he had surrendered

his political campaign. Many explanations might be forthcoming. But I cannot resist the temptation of believing that the British Government, convinced of Mr. Gandhi's real friendliness towards the British connection, sought to instal him once again on the high pedestal in the hearts of the millions of his countrymen after he was knocked down by his own ignominious surrender.

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LI.

REACTION AGAINST GANDHISM.

The removal of Mr. Gandhi from the political scene proved to be a veritable signal for the inauguration of the intellectual rebellion against many of his principles and programmes throughout the land. Discontent had been brewing within the ranks of the Maharashtra and Bengal parties that had so stoutly opposed his programme of non-co-operation at the Calcutta Session of 1920. Mr. Jayakar, presiding at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference at Thana towards the end of 1921, sounded the first note of protest against Mr. Gandhi's cult of orthodox non-co-operation. The same notes sounded much shriller at the Ahmedabad Congress. It was again the Maharashtra Party, re-inforced by all the discontented elements in the land which virtually moved a vote of censure on Mr Gandhi at the All-India Committee meeting on the 24th February, 1922. And they all now combined to plan a series of tactics with a view to dethrone the Gandhi cult as soon as Mr Gandhi was sent to Yerawada.

The first move in the direction was taken at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which was held on the 6th and 8th June, 1922, at Lucknow. The Committee, after recording its satisfaction at the progress of the constructive programme laid down at the previous meeting, and after noting "the widespread feeling that in view of the extremely unfair manner in which the policy of repression is being carried out by the Government, the country should be advised to resort to some form of civil disobedience" shrewdly resolved further:

"That the further consideration of the question whether *civil disobedience in some form, or some other measure of a similar character should be adopted*, should be taken up at its next meeting, to be held at Calcutta on the 16th August next".

"That in the meantime, the President be requested to nominate and authorise a few gentlemen to tour round the country and report on the situation in the next meeting".

In accordance with this Resolution, Hakim Ajmal Khan, the Acting President of the Congress, appointed, in consultation with the members of the Working Committee present at its meeting held on the 9th June, a Committee consisting of himself and the following members:—Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, Doctor M. A. Ansari, Sjt. V. J. Patal, Sjt. Jamnalal Bajaj (eventually replaced by Sjt. S. Kastoriranga Iyengar), and Sjt. M. M. H. J. M. Chhotani.

The Committee toured round the country, and took written and oral evidence from most of the leading Congress workers in the different Provinces. Finally the Committee signed its Report on the 30th October, 1922.

The Committee came to the unanimous conclusion that "the country was not prepared to embark upon the general mass Civil Disobedience, but recommended that Provincial Congress Committees be authorised to sanction civil disobedience of a limited character on certain conditions".

The Committee, however, evoked a veritable storm of controversy by the publication of its recommendations on the vexed question of Council Entry. The Committee was equally divided on the issue. Hakim Ajmal Khan, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sjt. V. J Patel showed that they were opposed to the orthodox cult of boycott of Councils by laying down the following recommendations:

"The Congress and the Khilafat at their Gaya Session (due to be convened at Christmas, 1922) should declare that in view of the fact that the working of the Legislative Councils during their first term has, besides proving a great obstacle to the redress of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and the speedy attainment of Swaraj, caused great misery and hardship to the people. It is desirable therefore that the following steps should be taken in strict accordance with the principles of non-violence and non-co-operation to avoid a recurrence of evil:

1. Non-co-operators should contest the election on the issue of the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate Swaraj, and make every endeavour to be returned in a majority.

2. If the non-co-operators are returned in a majority large enough to prevent a quorum, they should, after taking their seats, leave the Council Chamber in a body and take no part in the proceedings for the rest of the term.

3. If non-co-operators are returned in a majority which is not large enough to prevent a quorum, they should oppose every measure of the Government, including the budget, and only move Resolutions for the redress of the aforesaid wrongs and the immediate attainment of Swaraj.

4. As the new Councils will not assemble till January 1924, we further propose that the Congress Session of 1923 be held during the first, instead of the last week of December, and the matter be again brought up before the issue of a final mandate by the Congress in view of the Election".

The other three members of the Committee, Dr. Ansari, Sjt. Rajagopalachari and Sjt. Kasturiranga Iyengar recommended that "there should be no change of the Congress programme inspite of the boycott of the Councils".

The scales thus appeared to be evenly balanced. But presently Deshabandhu C. R. Das was released from jail, and in the course of a most historic pronouncement vigorously and wholeheartedly supported the programme of Council entry in the following words:

"Hitherto we have been boycotting the Councils from outside. We have succeeded in doing much. The prestige of the Councils is diminished. But although we have succeeded in doing much, these Councils are still there. It should be the duty of the Congress to boycott the Councils more effectively from within, than from without.

"The Reform Councils are really a mask which the bureaucracy has put on. I conceive it to be our clear duty to tear this mask from off their face; to end these Councils is the only effective boycott.

"In any case, we should adopt the recommendation of Hakim Ajmal Khan, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr. Patel in postponing the ultimate decision till the Congress of 1923, but in the meantime standing for election".

While controversy on the subject was still raging hot and fierce between the orthodox non-co-operationists of Mr. Gandhi's school on the one hand and the Party of Council Programme, led by the most brilliant political leaders of the country on the other, the All India Congress Committee met at Calcutta on the 28th November, 1922, under the Presidentship of Deshbandhu Das to consider the Report. During the discussion extending over several days, the leaders of both the Parties crossed swords freely and frankly. The Committee finally decided to postpone the consideration of the question to the Gaya Session of the Congress.

"Congress met in December at Gaya", writes Babu Rajendra Prasad in his introduction to YOUNG INDIA Vol. II. 'under the Presidentship of Deshbandhu Das, and the principal question which engaged its attention was naturally the question of Council entry. The Congress, on account of the interest which had been created in the controversy, was very largely attended, and continued its session for five days. It is sufficient to state that it turned down the resolution in favour of Council entry, and maintained the boycott of Councils by a large majority. It is remarkable that inspite of the fact that the most influential and trusted leaders, like Deshabandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Hakim Ajmal Khan, lent their powerful support in favour of a change in the original programme by removing the ban on Council entry the Congress refused under the advice of a comparatively younger and less known leader, Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, to countenance any weakening in it".

"It should, however, be borne in mind, that it was not merely the cogency of Sjt Rajagopalachari's reasoning that turned the scales against the great leaders. The tremendous revulsion of feeling in favour of Mr. Gandhi was also most useful to the orthodox party. Mr. Gandhi in jail, perhaps, proved a more potent force than he might have been outside. But even this sentiment, powerful as it was, did not ensure the victory of the orthodox

party. It was clearly realised within the ranks of the no-change party that the Council Party could be effectively countered only by sounding once again the trumpets of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Resolution which was eventually adopted by the Congress at the instance of Sjt. Rajagopalachari, called upon the country in no uncertain terms to prepare a campaign of civil disobedience at an early date, and further exhorted all the Provincial Congress Committees to enrol an effective force of volunteers by the 30th April, 1923.

Being present at the Gaya Congress, and having acted as one of the chief whips of the orthodox party, I took the Resolution on Civil Disobedience very seriously to heart. After enjoying freedom from all political work for about a year, I was called upon by Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, almost on the day of publication of the Civil Disobedience Committee's Report, to join the ranks of the Old Guard to save the Gandhi Party from extinction. All my love and regard for Mr. Gandhi was once again set boiling to the brim, and in January 1923, the Gujarat Provincial Committee appointed me as the Chief Secretary of a small Sub-Committee to carry on a most vigorous campaign throughout the districts of Gujarat for enrolling the quota of 1000 volunteers.

The heady wine of politics once again went to my head. In the course of a continuous tour extending over six weeks, my tone and temper became increasingly militant. My colleagues and friends warned me that I was heading for the prison. I did not mind it. But their warnings came true. The ubiquitous C. I. D. reported all our speeches to the authorities, who singled me out for prompt action. I was served with a notice under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code, asking me to provide security for good behaviour for a period of one year. The case came up for hearing on the 6th April, 1923, and on refusing to provide any security, and on giving expression to the pet doctrines of sedition and disaffection in a language even more unfettered than before, I was duly sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment, and ordered to be placed on A Class which had only recently been formed.

This sentence landed me first in Sabarmati jail, and finally in the Yerawada Prison, where I had the most unique privilege of sharing quarters with the "greatest man in the world".

LII

WITH GANDHI IN YERAWADA JAIL.

My first few days in Sabaramati jail had not proved very pleasant. Though the magistrate had ordered me to be placed in the special division, I had some rude surprises in store for me. For the jail authorities told me that, pending Government ratification of the Magistrate's order, I would be treated as an ordinary convict undergoing simple imprisonment. I was, therefore, started on the usual jail diet. While the noon meal of the Indian bread-though coarse and thick and sometimes containing a liberal mixture of stone and dirt—and Indian dal was not quite unsuited to my taste, I almost struck at the evening meal of similar bread and vegetable soup, which stands so much in the nostrils that even hardened convicts found it impossible to gulp it down their throats. Then again, my heart sank within me as I was shut down in my cell on the very first evening at about 6 o'clock during the summer heat. Moreover, I was the sole occupant of the entire European yard except, of course, for the usual complement of prison warders and prison servants. Thus oppressed and harrassed by a combination of adverse circumstances, I very soon developed the habit of retiring within the depths of my own consciousness and beguiling my time with ceaseless reading, contemplation and prayer.

Things, however, did not take long to straighten out. Within a couple of days the jail superintendent was kind enough to allow me some baked bread and milk. Hardly seven days had passed when I was vouchsafed the company of my friend, Mr. Dayalaji Desai. The Government also lost no time in passing final orders regarding our status as special division prisoners. So I began to receive liberal and plentiful supplies of food materials from my Ahmedabad home. And I spent some golden hours with Mr. Dayalaji, cooking and enjoying our simple meals and discussing many a topic in the uninterrupted seclusion of the Sabarmati jail.

I had thus thoroughly settled down in my new abode, and almost begun to like it, when I was suddenly asked, on the evening of the 14th May, 1923, to get ready with my meagre luggage for a railway trip. I had hardly left the gates of the jail when I learnt that I was being transferred to Mr. Gandhi's jail yard in Yerawada prison. My joy and enthusiasm knew no bounds when I was finally ushered into the Mahatma's presence the next day, as the hot mid-day sun was pouring blinding white light all over the vast barren compound of the big prison. I respectfully and reverently bowed down to my great leader, who laughed with exuberant joy on seeing me, and enquired about my health, and conditions in the Sabarmati jail. He also introduced me to the third companion, Mr. Monzar Ali, a Mahommedan patriot who had been transferred to Yerawada from Rangoon jail.

As I started settling down in my new surroundings I could not fail to be impressed with the striking difference between the European yard of the Sabarmati jail which I had just left and the miserable triangular compound within which we were penned almost like so many cattle, in dingy ill-ventilated stone cells, with cow-dung floors laid on a level with the ground. The cells were built at a narrow angle against a high jail wall of black stone that stared us always in the face. The third side, however, of the triangle was made of barbed wire fencing, which luckily allowed our eyes, though not our feet, to roam freely over the vast inner compound which was bounded on one side by the European yard, and on the other by the solitary cells, and on the third side was crossed by a big road which led from the main entrance to different yards within the jail. I, therefore, felt quite out of sorts and uncomfortable in the new place, and the obvious benefit even of Mr. Gandhi's company was very much counter-balanced by the awful inconvenience of treading, as it were, on each other's toes, morning, noon and night by being penned within such a narrow area. My nervousness was further accentuated by Mr. Gandhi's most annoying habit of walking in the compound on his wooden sandals, which made a sharp clattering noise every time he moved about on the cobblestone pavement.

I was, therefore, all the more surprised to hear from Mr Gandhi that he felt thoroughly comfortable in the yard to which he had been accustomed for more than a year. He had all that

he wanted for his creature comforts, his mental food, and above all his spiritual exercises. He was given his usual diet of goat's milk and fruit. He had his spinning wheel. He had large stocks of books on different subjects. He was given an iron cot and suitable bedding for repose. Above all, he had the use of the entire length and breadth of our small compound, and had the rare opportunity of seeing and sometime exchanging a few works with even some of the political prisoners who used to march from one jail compound to another through the open yard lying in front of the barbed wire fence.

I could, however, more fully enter into Mr. Gandhi's feelings in the matter when I heard for the first time the story of his initial privations in that very jail. For on the very evening that he arrived there he was suummarily deprived, not only of the spinning wheel, but also of the only food of goat's milk and fruit that he had carried with him.

He was also made to suffer the indignity, like any common prisoner of being locked up in his cell at about 5 o'clock in the evening. For bedding he was given only two rough blankets. He covered them with his own white bed-sheets, and used his few books for his pillow. And he felt the bitter pangs of a mother being deprived of her only child when Mr. Banker was separated from him almost on the very morrow of their arrival in Yerawada.

Some things, of course, began to improve very soon. The jail superintendent lost no time in perceiving that Mr. Gandhi would literally fast if he could not spin every day. Nor could he sustain himself on any other food except goat's milk and fruits. So his food and his spinning wheel were restored to him the next morning, and the authorities arranged thereafter for some goats to be milked in the jail compound every morning, so as to provide him with sufficient milk. The necessary bedding was also soon provided. The other question of his confinement in the evening took more time to solve, and it was only after about seven days that his cell was left open at night as during the day, so that he could thereafter take his evening walk in the silence of the jail compound, and pray in the early morning and at night under the clear Indian sky resplendent with the moon and the stars.

I soon discovered that Mr. Gandhi had also fought out some other points with the jail authorities and Government during the previous year. Being sentenced to ordinary imprisonment he was entitled to one interview, and to send and receive one letter every three months. But his first long letter addressed to Hakim Ajmal Khan on the 14th April, 1922, was returned to him by the Government on the ground that it commented on conditions in the jail and discussed political subjects. Mr. Gandhi thereupon refused on principle to send or receive any letter whatsoever and contented himself instead with an additional interview thus giving him two interviews in three months. These also were attended by some trouble in the beginning. For Mr. Devadas Gandhi, his youngest son, broke out into loud sobbings on seeing him compelled to stand in the presence of the jail superintendent who was comfortably seated on a chair, the authorities further picked bones with Mr. Gandhi over the discussions of public and political subjects with his friends and family. At this, however, he threatened to cut off all interviews. The Government eventually gave way on the subject, and allowed him the fullest latitude in his discussions at those periodical interviews.

On the very evening of my admission to his yard, Mr. Gandhi explained to me his daily routine, and invited me to participate in it, if I liked. He got up every morning at 4 o'clock, and after spending about ten or fifteen minutes on ablution, he sat down for prayer. He recited some Sanskrit verses from the Bhagwad Gita—the Song Celestial—and then recited some Hindi and Gujarati evotional songs. This finished, he read the Sanskrit philosophical works the Upanishads, for about two hours, and devoted an hour to the index of the Gita. This brought him to about 7, when the milkman brought him about 3 lbs. of hot steaming goat's milk and poured it into his tin vessel. This milk he consumed with oranges and sweet lemons. By this time the jail sub-inspector arrived to see to his comfort, and treating him like a friend or almost as a father, discussed not only Mr. Gandhi's personal comforts, but even his own personal cares and family questions. Then Mr. Gandhi devoted about three hours at a stretch to spinning. At 11 o'clock he took his bath and started another course of miscellaneous reading. At one o'clock he slept exactly for half an hour and then took lessons in

Urdu from our friend, Mr. Ali. At 3 o'clock he took his second and last meal with fruit and milk, spent some time in general conversation and then again read from 4 to 7 in the evening. He then took his evening stroll in the narrow compound for about an hour, offered his last prayers at 8, and went to bed.

Now there were many items in this time-table to which either I was not accustomed or which were not to my liking. Though generally an early riser I was certainly not habituated to getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning. Nor had I ever prayed at such an early hour. Then again, I rather liked to do cane work which I had already begun in Sabarmati jail, than spin yarn. Still, joining Mr. Gandhi in such strange crciumstances, I seriously felt as if I was on the trial of my life-time, and almost felt it a point of honour and duty to follow him as strenuously as I could. I, therefore, began to join him in prayers from the very next morning. And though I did exercise my independence in pursuing cane work for some weeks, I eventually surrendered to Mr. Gandhi's oft-repeated exhortation to spin for all I was worth. "Let me go through the mill of *Satyagraha* under the guidance and inspiration of Mr. Gandhi its great leader", I said to myself, "and then I will be more than ever qualified to pronounce my judgment on it with all the weight of my full experience".

In other respects, I more or less continued the course of ceaseless thinking and voracious reading that I had already begun in Sabarmati jail. The spiritual training that I began to receive from the moment that I stepped into Yerawada was re-inforced by the wealth and the variety of books in Hindi, Mahratti, Gujarati and English—on a vast variety of subjects—religious, philosophical and others—that Mr. Gandhi had stocked in his library cell. Then again my cell was now left open by night, and I was given such food as Mr. Gandhi kindly prescribed for me. The Yerawada jail provided in every sense a truly physical, intellectual and spiritual feast. And I hoped—though almost against hope that I would emerge from my cell a veritable apostle of the great cult of *Satyagraha-cum-spinning* which Mr. Gandhi was born to preach to the storm-tossed, much-ailing world.

LIII

GANDHI SUCKS A POISON WOUND

My first discussions with Mr. Gandhi naturally revolved on the salient features of the political situation. Two impressions had been indelibly carved on my mind during the Gaya Congress and thereafter. First about the wonderful heroism and disciplined suffering of the Akali Sikhs, who carried out a most extraordinary species of *Satyagraha* against their corrupt temple priests, and incidentally against the Government forces allied with them The fine militant forms of Akali men and women armed with their kirpans and dressed in their black clothes, still floated before my imaginations as they had marched only a few months ago in processions singing their religious songs in the spacious compound of the Gaya Congress Secondly, the *Satyagraha* Resolution adopted at the last Congress was naturally uppermost in my mind, as it was during the campaign of enrolling volunteers when I had been clapped in jail. What had hurt me particularly in this connection was that responsible leaders, like Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, had, after doing everything to drag me out of my literary seclusion and to incite me to political action, damned my campaign and my imprisonment with faint praise. I, therefore naturally unburdened myself before Mr. Gandhi on both these questions and sought to fortify my judgment with his opinions.

My very first discussion with Mr. Gandhi on the Akali question, however, chilled my enthusiasm. He told me that he had read a good deal of literature about the Sikh religion and the Sikh religious campaigns, and also knew the Akalis well by experience, and he had come to the conclusion that their campaign fell far short of true *Satyagraha*, for he had no doubt that they harboured violence in their heart even when they appeared to welcome a hailstorm of bullets, swords and spears with apparent equanimity. Even the large numbers in which they marched on Nankana, and other shrines, served to show that they harboured in their hearts

a species of violence. Hurt at such adverse judgment, I brought to his notice the generous encomium that had been showered on them by no less a person than Mr. C. F. Andrews, who had seen with his own eyes these hefty men beaten and even killed during their successive struggles without even an attempt at retaliation. He heard all this and much more that I put before him. But while expressing the warmest admiration for their heroism, he rigidly stuck to his conclusion and refused to give his saintly blessing to such a semi-militant movement.

Coming than to the *Satyagraha* Resolution of the Gaya Congress and the duty of resorting to civil disobedience in the immediate future, Mr. Gandhi said :

"1. No general movement of civil disobedience should be resorted to at present with a view to attain Swaraj, as we are not qualified at present to administer and retain it.

2. Those who are otherwise qualified to resort to *Satyagraha* can do so on limited issue, if only in order to maintain the tradition of sacrifice.

3. Individuals like Dr. Vardarajalu are certainly welcome to resort to individual *Satyagraha* if they find the chains of polititical slavery too galling for their nerves.

4. He entirely agreed with me that the leaders who had pledged themselves to *Satyagraha* unquestioningly offer themselves up for sacrifice even if they found themselves guilty of miscalculation".

He thus implicitly disapproved of the attitude of leaders like Messrs. Patel and C Rajagopalachari who refused to carry the fight to a finish inspite of all their wonderful promises at the Gaya Congress. Mr. Gandhi, however, held that the rank and file should not be dragged into the fray at present.

So Mr. Gandhi had hardly moved by a hairbreadth from the position that he had taken up just before he landed in jail. In fact, he appeared not only to be more than ever confirmed in his views by all that he had read and heard since, but had become even more meticulous in his insistence on the fullest

performance of the conditions of *Satyagraha* and the implications of Swaraj.

An accident led us to discuss this question more fully. The usual rumours about Mr. Gandhi's premature release had gained somehow more than usual currency At Mr. Mahadev Desai's instance, Mrs. Gandhi, while communicating this information to Mr. Gandhi at a recent interview, had asked him for a fore-taste of the message that he would deliver on his sudden release. The subject, therefore, become almost topical, and Mr. Gandhi in the course of casual conservation expatiated on his attitude towards his early release.

He would love best to gain his release from the Swaraj Parliament. He would hate, on the other hand, to be released as harmless individual whom people had ceased to follow. Nor would he like to be released on the ground of illness. I prodded him, however, with a further question. How would he like to be released on the sudden outbreak of war or some such international complication, on the distinct understanding, of course, that he would not do anything to embarrass the Government in such a serious crisis ? Characteristically enough he did not reply.

It was evident, however, all throughout the conversation that he did not like to hear of any premature release, if only because he had not yet evolved any new message for the people. I questioned him on the points he would give to the distracted people of India. And this is what I got out of him.

He would be even more uncompromising, if possible, in insisting on the fullest performance of each and every one of the conditions that he had already laid down for mass disobedience. He had acquiesced in the imperfect fulfilment of such conditions at Bardoli. He would not repeat such a mistake.

His ideals of Swaraj had been scattered throughout the pages of YOUNG INDIA. He had seen before as through a glass darkly. Everything had become clearer to his view now. Even though he would insist on a religious but a truly political ideal of Swaraj, he would in future inveigh against heavy expenditure on High Courts and Universities of the Western

types, even as he had condemned before the Courts, Schools and Councils formed on a foreign plan. He would thus, no doubt, gladly comply with the request of Babu Bhagwan Das, and draw up a simple constitution of Swaraj as visualised by him. It would not, however, hurt anybody, nor would it jar on the nerves of any of his political followers. For truth, though unpalatable, runs the Sanskrit proverb, would be always sweet. Having formed such a constitution he would even go to the length of asking for the vote of the Congress on it. And while he would regret the succession of those who did not agree to his ideals, he would be content to work with those who approved of them and pledged themselves to follow him as true soldiers on the royal road of non-violence.

Finally, we reached the discussion of the inevitable Charkha. Spinning every day for three hours the whole year round. Mr. Gandhi had become, if possible, even a stauncher devotee of the spinning wheel. He was now convinced that he could prove his thesis of hand-spinning by quoting chapter and verse from the sacred Gita. "We must learn to see", he said, "the image of Rama and Krishna on every yarn of the thread spun out of the spinning wheel".

I tried to bring him to facts. I gave him the sad news of the stoppage of spinning wheels in all parts of Gujarat. He was painfully surprised. He had not heard about it.

But no facts, not even Himalayan quantities of them could move him from his faith in the Charkha. For presently he asked me to spin as long as I could, as a sovereign remedy for poverty.

He read from a stray bulletin of efforts made to promote primary schools in villages. He was overjoyed at it. "It does not matter if our colleges," he said, "but we must control primary education:"—as a means, collapse of course, of promoting spinning in villages.

I, however, remained unconvinced as I could not understand how my spinning in the jail compound or the establishment of

primary school in a flourishing area like Bardoli, could be any means of alleviating the poverty of the Kaliparaj in Mandvi or the Bhils of Punchmahal.

While all these stray discussions left me unconvinced and dissatisfied, a remarkable incident occurred which enabled me to see into the very depths of Mr. Gandhi's soul. One evening our negro warder from Somaliland—who had been taken prisoner in Arabia during the War—was bitten by a scorpion on his hand. He gave a shout. Mr. Gandhi was quickly on the spot consoling Adan (for that was the Negro's name). On learning the nature of the injury, Mr. Gandhi sent another warder to the hospital. He would not, however, wait fer the doctor to arrive with his medicines He first asked for a knife to cut into the wound and to let out the poison. But he found the knife dirty. So missing no moment he quickly washed the area round the wound, and applying his lips to the wound began to suck out the poison I and Mr. Ali hardly knew what he was doing before he had nearly finished it. He went on spitting after sucking and eventually stopped when Adan felt relief. And to appreciate the full value of Mr. Gandhi's loving sacrifice it must be remembered that his teeth were then bleeding and he had only recently recovered from a long spell of illness in jail.

But our life in jail was not all seriousness. Mr. Gandhi never failed to add a touch of humour to it consciously and more often unconsciously. We derived some harmless fun from his attitude towards fruits. Mrs. Gandhi, like a devoted wife, disregarded Mr. Gandhi's injunctions not to bring him fruits. And when she brought them, he hesitated to accept. For in his opinion such extra fruits that he got from outside were necessarily articles of luxury, which somehow did not accord with the rigorous simplicity of jail life. In the beginning, therefore, he had refused to accept them. Gradually however, be relented He accepted them but sent them over straight to the jail hospital. By the time, however, I arrived on the scene, he had introduced still further modifications in his procedure. He kept the whole parcel with himself and generously distributed them among his co-prisoners, warders, and even some friendly jail officials, not disdaining to do justice to a fair number of them himself. Not

that I was not acquainted with Mr. Gandhi's conscientious scruples on such points and his clever method of getting over those scruples. Nevertheless, it amused me to see how these scruples followed him even into the seclusion of jail and how with his never-failing ingenuity he had got over them to the joy and satisfaction of all concerned.

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LIV

RAMZAN—ID—& NEWSPAPERS

I proved more lucky than I had imagined. For while Mr. Gandhi had remained immured within those dingy cells for more than a year, our whole party was transferred to the European yard of the jail within seven days of my arrival.

I must not, however, fail to record one of my sweetest reminiscences of the old yard. I arrived in Yerawada during the month of Ramazan when pious Mohammedans observe their yearly religious fast. Our companion, Mr. Ali, observed, under the inspiration of the Mahatma the sacred fast for the whole month. This fast is terminated by the *fast of Id-ul-Fitra.* The believing Mohammedan, however, may not break the fast till he sees the crescent moon at the end of the month of fasting.

The day of the *Id* dawned on us in the old prison yard. And strange though it might appear, Mr. Gandhi, though a pious Hindu, shared to the full the festal spirit of Mr. Ali and other Mussulman prisoners who were confined in our neighbourhood. The whole day long, therefore, he went on exchanging festal greetings of *Id Mubarak* with the Muslim prisoners whom he could see across the barbed wire fence. He was exuberant in giving his blessings to Mr. Ali. Then the evening came. And Mr. Gandhi appeared to be even more anxious than Mr. Ali to catch a glimpse of the crescent moon during the short span of the few minutes that it could be seen hanging, as it were, in mid-air on the tops of the trees, peeping over the high stone wall of the inner prison. His joy knew no bounds when he did eventually succeed in greeting the crescent moon. He was so excited that he actually over-stepped the boundary of the barbed wire fence to have a clearer view of the digit of the moon. His joyous shout called out Mr. Ali quickly from his cell. And presently we were all thronged together in the open compound watching the frail beauty of the crescent moon for a few minutes before it vanished behind the trees.

I had watched at close quarters Mr. Gandhi's heroic efforts at Hindu-Mohammedan rapprochament on the political stage. I had also vivid memories of his personal fraternisation with all classes of Mohammedans, from big political leaders and priests down to the meanest of them. Still his enthusiastic celebration of the Muslim *Id* festival, his exuberant greetings to his Muslim fellow prisoners, and above all his abundant joy at the sight of the crescent moon brougt home to me, as nothing else had done before, his romantic, conception of Hindu-Muslim unity. For it revealed to me how he, by making a clean sweep of excrescences like idolatry and ceremonies, had developed a new ideal of Hindu religion which could be easily reconciled to the best in Mohammedanism, so that the votaries of both religions could fraternise with one another on the occasions of their religious festivals.

The test of the pudding is, however, in the eating thereof. And we have since learnt by bitter experience how little such romanticism has availed to cement the hearts of the followers of the two religions. And it has become abundantly clear with the passage of time, that it is only on the basis of a rational understanding of their economic, political an other secular interests that the apparently heterogeneous people of India could be united, irrespective of the differences of their castes and creeds.

Not many days had gone by before Major Jones, the superintendent of the jail, hurriedly popped into our compound one afternoon and joyously told Mr. Gandhi—"I have just returned from Mahabaleshwar" (summer resort of the Government of Bombay), "and I am glad to inform you that the Bombay Government has given me permission to transfer you to the European yard". While we were overjoyed at the news, Mr. Gandhi appeared to be quite unperturbed. "Oh, is that so?" he remarked, "I and my companions will be very glad indeed to transfer ourselves to the other yard if that is the will of the Government. Major Jones promptly replied: "But you will go to the new place only if you like it after seeing it". After a few more words Major Jones retired. Mr. Gandhi did not care to see the new place because he somehow took this transfer as a Government order. So I went with Mr. Ali to inspect the European yard, and found it a veritable Paradise in jail. The next day we shifted to our new quarters.

Unlike our old cells the new yard was surrounded on all sides by a thick high wall, 20 feet high. But the compound was very spacious and was laid out with a fairly decent garden which gave us fruits and flowers of many varieties in the ensuing monsoon. On either side of the compound were two lines of twenty cells, solidly built on a plinth about 10 feet above the level of the ground. The cells were beautifully ventilated and while they had a door on only one side, there was a running spacious verandah, nearly ten feet wide, on both sides of the cells, Mr. Gandhi occupied the first four cells—the first one for his library and toilet, the second for bed, the third for spinning and the fourth for storing cotton, slivers, old spinning wheels and carding things. I occupied the next two, and my friend, Mr. Ali, occupied a cell right at the end of our line of cells. This line was given up entirely to us and we had complete freedom to communicate with one another day and night. But we were definitely instructed not to communicate with the European and Anglo-Indian prisoners confined in the other barracks. They were naturally treated as ordinary prisoners, given ordinary jail work and the special rations fixed for them. But it was always possible to see them when we took our stroll in the garden in the evening, and especially when they had crossed over to the jail library which was located in a room behind our barracks.

I enthusiastically asked Mr. Gandhi if he did not like these cells better than the old ones. He gave a characteristic reply. "Yes these new cells are far better than the old ones but I should have preferred to continue in the old place and I readily agreed to our transfer, because Major Jone's words, though not so couched, amounted in my opinion to a Government order". I really could not understand the logic of this view. Perhaps it was because Mr. Gandhi had somehow accustomed himself to the old surroundings in which he thought his lot was cast for six years. Or perhaps it was, because the old place, however bad, was so situated, that it could give him to see many of his beloved followers as they marched through this compound, and also because he could keep himself far more in touch with their general condition and the jail atmosphere in general. But many of the political and even the ordinary prisoners could enter our compound too, with real or ostensible

purpose of borrowing books from the jail library, and Mr. Gandhi was never more delighted then when he had the opportunity of exchanging greetings with these other prisoners as they passed by our cells on their way to the library.

But while these surrounding walls, 30 feet high, precluded us from all outside contact, we had other opportunities of being in touch with the outside world. Our new compound was separated by a distances of 10 to 20 feet from the outer wall of the jail, which touched a big public road, leading from Poona to many important cities and centres of pilgrimage. We could, therefore, hear the whirr of the motor-cars, the tinkling bells of the bullock-carts, the songs and the music of the passers by, and even the chiming of the temple bells. On one or two occasions we were greatly pleased to hear devotional songs being sung by a crowd of thousands of pilgrims who were on their way to Pandharpur-a great centre of pilgrimage. On the other side, separated by a wall, were confined many political prisoners. Some of our warders could go up on a high tree next to the wall and catch a glimpse of the prisoners—Mr. Savarkar was one of them—confined on the other side and could give us sometimes some information about them. And strolling in the compound, early or late in the night I had the melancholy pleasure of hearing the notes of thrilling Indian national songs as they were being wafted by the evening breeze from the cells of some of the political prisoners.

We had also channels of communication with the outside world. Our Indian doctor, who naturally saw all other political prisoners in the course of his daily routine, would give us news about their difficulties and conditions. And then we got newspapers. We were not allowed any newspapers except one or two Indian monthly magazines. I was, therefore, surprised when one day my friend Mr. Ali, gave me a bundle of English newspapers and told me : You may read them and put them in the fire. In any case, don't show them to Mr. Gandhi. But he will be glad to get any news you derive from them. Thereafter I began to receive at irregular intervals bundles of newspapers from Maulana Hasrat Mohani—the great Mohammedan poet of North India—who was confined in the condemned cell, as he was considered a dangerous political prisoner. He often came in for severe

punishment as knives, writing materials and newspapers were found in his cell against the orders of the jail authorities. But inspite of every punishment and inspite of his complete isolation, he somehow managed to get newspapers and send them with red and blue pencil marked to us asking us to draw Mr. Gandhi's attention to the marked news.

And every time I read these newspapers. I went to Mr. Gandhi and gave him all the news which he received with much interest. He always laughed heartily at the clever tricks by which Mr. Mohani managed to smuggle the newspapers and applauded his courage and heroism, though he differed from his doctrine of violent revolution. As this continued for some time, I became very curious to know how Mr. Gandhi could reconcile his idea of strict observance of jail rules with such broad tolerance of our newspaper smuggling. So I tackled him once on this point. His reply was characteristic: "I have already told the jail superintendent" he said, "that I cannot possibly prevent myself from receiving information coming to me from many sources including newspapers". And so this shrewd sage often succeeded in reconciling seeming contradictions in theory and practice and would cover it all over with his radiant, toothless smile.

LV

GANDHI AT A MILLSTONE

The new surroundings brought no change in the even tenor of our life. Still I certainly felt as if some oppressive weight had been taken off my chest. I, therefore, felt more cheerful and light-hearted. And it was under the inspiration of the fine garden and the open space available to us that I succeeded in securing some small necessities to brighten up our lot in the jail.

Though the jail officials were equally accessible to all of us, it was implicitly taken for granted that Mr. Gandhi should represent our smallest needs and necessities to them. For Major Jones had by this time allowed Mr. Gandhi to settle the food cards of his colleagues in the yard and even to prescribe the kind of work that they might do, with a view to earn remission of two days a month according to the jail regulations. Both Mr. Ali I therefore, first informed Mr. Gandhi of our new needs and he either passed them on to the authorities or gave us his permission to represent them directly to them. But if he chose to reject any of the items neither of us dared to say a word about it to the officials.

This friendly service of Mr. Gandhi stood me in very good stead. For while in Sabaramati jail I had thought myself lucky to be able to get all the rations I desired at my own expense. Mr. Gandhi's high standing now enabled me to secure all the necessary articles of diet at Government expense. And yet he would not think of granting me certain necessities if only because he and Mr. Banker had done without them for a whole year. For instance, he would not worry about getting a real bread knife, as it was with extraordinary difficulty that he had secured the privilege of using a pocket knife for cutting bread. Then again, for butter I first got a lump of Indian ghee in a packing of green leaves. So I naturally insisted on having a real bread knife and dairy butter. And by dint of perseverance I finally succeeded in inducing Mr. Gandhi to permit me to represent the matter directly to the authorities, who granted me and others these

amenities immediately. Fortunately I got, almost without asking, a light for working at night or in the early morning, as Mr. Gandhi had already been granted the privilege though only under special orders from the Government of India. All these novelties, coupled with the privilege of sleeping out on the verandah made my life in the European yard much happier and brighter than it had been either in the Sabarmati jail or in the old yard.

Towards t e end of May I suffered from a slight attack of malaria. My ration of 2 lbs. of milk was thereafter increased to 3 lbs And although I very soon resumed solid food, I continued to consume the additional pound of milk—not without Mr. Gandhi's implied permission, of course—during the whole period of my jail life. Similarly, hot water was supplied to me for bath during the whole period of my stay at Yerawada, though I really began to receive it during my illness. It was also due to my short spell of fever that I was granted the additional luxury of a mosquito curtain. Needless to say, that I thus set out on a course of luxurious life which I had never enjoyed before, and which exercised on me a degree of softening influence, the full effect of which I could realise only when I came out of the jail and tried to live in the old way again.

But while Mr. Gandhi helped in piling unnecessary luxuries on me, he was even more assiduous in setting out before me a course of discipline and physical labour, which I had never undergone before. By precept, and even more by his personal example, he coaxed me to get up daily at four in the morning. Though I followed him almost instinctively for a few days, the sacred hour of prayer very soon began to weigh like a nightmare on my heart during my sleep. I, therefore, began to sleep far out on the back verandah—at a distance of nearly fifty yards from Mr. Gandhi, Threafter I was only accessible to the early call of our warder. who, however, had not the compelling power of the Mahatma, And though I very soon ceased to join the Mahatma at prayer I continued, inspite of varying irregularities, to get up very early throughout my jail period. And association of Buddhist Vihoras and Christian monasteries was so indelibly impressed on my mind by the few weeks of early prayers and evening strolls with our

great Saint, that it was not eradicated even by my subsequent irregularities in early rising and withdrawal from routine prayers.

I told Mr. Gandhi one evening during one of our evening strolls in the spacious garden, that I felt as if I was enveloped in the atmosphere of a mediæval monastic order. He liked this comparison very much and proceeded to enlarge on the Trappist Order of monks whom he had seen in South Africa. These monks, he told me, took a life—long vow of silence when they entered the order. They got up every day at 2 o'clock in the morning and remained in prayer almost till the dawn. They devoted themselves largely to manual work in the garden, as they were not allowed—with special exceptions—to go into the outer world. They also devoted themselves to religious reading. They communicated their needs, such as they were, by signs. Only the Head Superior was privileged to speak with the members of the hierarchy and with the outside visitors. And I could easily realise how Mr. Gandhi liked the simple life of those monks, hedged all round by vows and prohibitions, as he himself was habituated to set great value on vows of prohibitions in his own life.

And strangely enough, an accident served to bring nearer home to him the memory of the Trappist monks. For in his meticulous anxiety to pray at 4 o'clock in the morning, he one day got up at a most unearthly hour. For none of us had either any watch or clock, and the jail bells ringing every hour left us in suspense in the interval. So on that day at Mr. Gandhi's word, we all solemnly assembled together to offer our prayers to the Almighty. But after we dispersed we heard the jail bell striking three. I and Mr. Ali therefore lost no time in going back to bed. Not so, Mr. Gandhi. He read on till the morning and went through his daily routine with his usual regularity. Only his eyes were burning red when we assembled together for our evening meal, and he laughed most heartily when I reminded him that he had, however, unwillingly, followed the practice of the Trappist monks whose story he had related to me only a few days ago.

My friend, Mr. Ali, however did not content himself with treating the episode as a huge joke. He thought that Mr. Gandhi would really impair his health and eyes if he continued to get up

any time he happened to wake up for fear of missing his sacred hour of prayer. He, therefore, began to discuss with Mr. Gandhi the necessity of asking the authorities for a watch or an alarm clock. But Mr. Gandhi firmly turned down the suggestion on the ground that, as prisoners, we could not possibly ask for such a luxury. Mr. Ali, however, was adamant. Eventually Mr. Gandhi was pleased to concede that perhaps we could fittingly ask for an hour-glass. It suddenly dawned on us, however, that it would not serve any earthly use as it could not tell us the hour. So the idea was finally abandoned. But not before Mr. Gandhi had given us formal promise that he would rather lie in bed and wait for the jail bells to ring before he got out in future for prayers.

The daily course of manual labour further served to deepen the monastic feeling in my mind. I had already resumed my cane work, to which I had devoted about an hour or two every day. But the persistent accounts I heard of punishments given for insufficient work on the mill-stone made me somehow anxious to try grinding myself. Incidentally I could grind the necessary amount of wheat for my own bread. Mr. Gandhi supported my idea most enthusiastically. For he had done a great deal of grinding in the South African jails, and though now an old man he appeared quite cheerful in helping me to the new exercise. So at Mr. Gandhi's request, the jail Sub-inspector set up within a few days a mill-stone on the fine open verandah.

The first day of this novel exercise brought me a great surprise. For while I got thoroughly exhausted and out of breath after a few turns of the wheel, Mr. Gandhi continued with it for about half an hour at a stretch. He then explained that it was more a matter of practice than of strength, and so, though a weaker man, he could grind much longer.

Encouraged then by Mr. Gandhi's words, I persisted with the experiment, and got used finally to grind for about thirty or forty minutes every day. It remained indeed one of the most permanent factors of my jail life, and I was proud to show off my novel capacity for working on a mill-stone, to the great surprise of some of my friends, after I was released from Yerawada.

I might fittingly conclude this chapter with some interesting remarks made by Mr. Gandhi on the worth and efficiency of the great gospel of non-violence and on the great religions of the world. When had we the chance, he asked—in the course of one of our eternal discussions on *religion cum-politics* to see Christianity at its best? How long have we seen Islam, either, at its highest?

One has lasted two thousand years, the other thirteen hundred years. What did such periods, however, count for in the infinite life of this earth? The same could be said about Hinduism and Budhism. It is possible that India might not take to heart the great message of non-violence that was enshrined in all the great religions of the world. The world, however—and here he suddenly switched off from non-violence to the spinning wheel—would accept it if it was the true emblem of truth and non-violence. Eventually Indians might even win Swaraj by resorting to violence, and the sort of freedom thus achieved would be certainly better than the present shame of subjection. It would, however, mean nothing to him, and India in his opinion would have no high message to deliver to the distracted and storm-tossed nations of the world.

LVI.

GANDHI WOULD SHUT DOWN COTTON MILLS

Most of us practically left out political garb on the door-step of the goal as we entered its massive portals. So, after the first few political discussions with Mr. Gandhi were over, we generally devoted ourselves to the discussion of a wide variety of non-political subjects—such as religion, philosophy, social reform and analysis of History.

A casual item of news, however, from the outside world created a fresh fermentation in our minds. So towards the end of May, 1922, we somehow learned that a special meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was to be convened with a view to giving necessary latitude to the Swaraj Party within the Congress, to contest the ensuing elections.

Mr. Gandhi received the news unperturbed. For he was sure that by the time that he was released from goal the Swaraj Party would have realised the error of its ways and returned like the prodigal son to the royal road of five-fold non-co-operation. In any event, he was positively certain that the spinning propaganda would continue unabated throughout the land. He cited the instance of Sjt. Hanmant Rao and my friend Mr. Banker, who, chastened by long spells of penitential suffering, had settled down to khaddar work, coupled, of course, with other literary, social or political activities.

He then enlarged on several schemes of covering the land with a network of spinning wheels. He wanted loyal and experienced workers to settle down in poor areas like Dohad and Mandvi, to carry the message of the spinning wheel to the poorest of the poor. They should be authorised to realise loans for long terms. They should either persuade the cultivator to grow cotton or should import it from outside.

The poor should be supplied with cotton on credit as well as spinning wheels and carding apparatus. And the wages of spinning should be credited to their account. Even losses should be sustained in this activity in the preliminary stages and the spinning rate might be increased to tempt large numbers of spinners. While the spinners should be induced to adopt the khaddar clothing it should not be made a condition, at any rate, in the initial stages.

The question however remained: Who would buy all the stocks of khaddar that could indeed be produced in large quantities among such poverty-stricken areas? Surely not the half-nude Bhils and the half-starved Kaliparaj, who would naturally prefer to buy the cheaper mill-cloth for their needs. Mr. Gandhi's whim, therefore, of making such areas self-sufficient would not be realised and the spinning workers would have to depend to a large and perhaps ever-increasing measure on the custom of the middle and the rich classes. But why should these middle and rich classes again bother themselves with coarse khaddar of uneven texture, when they could easily get superior fabrics from Bombay and Ahmedabad at much cheaper prices?

I discussed the question further with myself. Finding no raison d'etre for the spinning wheel in the modern economic life of India, I felt convinced that it could exist only alongside Mr. Gandhi's gospel of primitive economics. But then how could such a a gospel make any real headway when even the comparatively backward life of the Indian people was being invaded by increasingly complex machinery at every turn? And if Mr. Gandhi's whole plan outlined in his "Hind-Swaraj" had no chance of being realised under present conditions, how could the solitary plant of the Charkha flourish in the soil overburned with railways and factories?

Within a few days, therefore, I set a new series of questions to Mr. Gandhi on the subject. Did he not deem it absolutely necessary to revolutionise the entire psychology of the Indian people in order to universalise the use of the spinning wheel? He replied somewhat in the following vein: He did not care if machinery continued to invade other departments of life. *He was however convinced that no machinery of any kind whatever*

should be allowed to touch cotton or cotton yarn at any stage o its coversion into cloth, if the millions of India's poor were to be saved from the agonies of starvation. He then pointed out to me how many European countries had heavily subsidised their new industries of sugar and indigo and even old home industries like Scotch Tweed in order to maintain them against the onrush of foreign competition. Had not England carried on a most ruthless boycott against the finest muslins of Dacca and the silks of Murshidabad? This answer, however, raised for me a fresh crop of difficulties. For such subsidies generally could only be granted for a limited period on the distinct understanding that the protected industries are finally expected to compete on equal terms in the open market with the foreign products.

Supposing, then, that we spent many crores of rupees in building up this khaddar industry in India for fifteen, twenty or even thirty years, could he, I asked, visualise any time in the measurable future, when at last his pet industry would be so thoroughly organised on a business-like scale that its products would be able to compete on equal terms with the piece-goods turned out by the Indian mills?

Then a strange thing happened. For the first and perhaps the last time he candidly confessed that he had not thought over this particular aspect of the khaddar problem. He explained the reason. For he had generally been engaged in revolutionising the taste of the people. He had not, therefore, given much thought to the question of competition. So he asked for time.

Next evening, however, he hastened to communicate his reply to me. He answered my real question in the negative. For he could not bring himself to believe that khaddar could compete even after a period of twenty years with mill-made goods in the open market. One would have thought that the khaddar business had been settled once for all. Not so, however, with Mr. Gandhi. And lest his frank answer be construed into an admission of defeat he proceeded to support the tottering edifice of khaddar with a set of the most amazing arguments that I had ever heard before or since.

Swaraj, in his opinion, could only be secured by carrying out to the full the gospel of Swadeshi and the boycott of British cloth. He, therefore, deemed no cost too great for subsidising khaddar till freedom was gained.

After Swaraj had, however, been attained he would, if appointed the President or Prime Minister of the Indian Republic, take following far-reaching measures to ensure the stability and prosperity of the new-born khaddar industry:—

1. He would unconditionally shut down the import of all foreign cloth.

2. He would then issue an ordinance ordering all Indian mills to cease the manufacture of textile goods.

3. He would export all existing stocks of foreign and home-made piece-goods to other countries.

4. Having thus barred out all competition, he would finally proceed to nationalise the existing plants of Indian taxtile mills and then dismantle them or turn them to other uses so that no machinery could pollute cotton or yarn by its impious touch in the sacred land of Bharats.

Such an audacious and far-reaching plan left me dumbfounded. Recovering, however, my wits in a few minutes I asked him if he would broadcast these views on his release from gaol. For I deemed it necessary that in future only those people should follow him who were in sympathy with his quixotic plan of national regeneration.

Mr. Gandhi's answer, however, was, as usual on such occasions, beautifully vague. He would promise nothing. For he did not believe, like some other great political laaders, in publishing an exhausting manifesto of all his aims and methods in advance of the times. He would, therefore, publish his plans in such instalments and on such occasions as he deemed most suitable in the course of his future work.

Nine long years have passed since Mr. Gandhi unfolded to me this sensational plan of stabilising the khaddar industry in

the seclusion of the prison cell. Yet Mr. Gandhi's lips still remain sealed on the subject. And while he still continues to harbour a plan so thoroughly destructive of the textile industry that India has succeeded in building up during the last fifty years, the ever-increasing tempo of his Swadeshi and Boycott campaign helps to multiply the number of textile mills in the country and the profits of their masters.

LVI A

MULSHI PETAH SATYAGRAHA

While we generally eschewed politics from our minds and discussions, they would not leave Mr. Gandhi alone. First he had to fight the jail authorities for several small mercies for his own person. That itself took some months. Then he always argued with the authorities for comforts for his fellow prisoners. And finally, as the supreme leader of the greatest national organisation of the country, he could not possibly remain indifferent to the general treatment and the special punishments meted out to the large and increasing contingent of political prisoners in the Yerawada jail.

While the number of ordinary non-co-operation prisoners in the jail was then almost insignificant, the Mulshi Petah *Satyagrahis* were every day gaining in numbers and importance. This "*Satyagraha Campaign*" had been started with the object of preventing the Tata Electric Company from acquiring the sacred home lands of the Mulshi Petah village, which the Company wanted to flood for building a dam across the river in the near vicinity. Local and patriotic feelings were roused to the highest pitch throughout the whole of the Maharashtra as soon as the Tata's plans were revealed. And a special *Satyagraha* Committee composed of local and Provincial leaders was appointed to conduct a campaign of passive resistance against the building of the dam in case all reasonable appeals failed to move the Tata Company from their purpose. And though this Committee carried on its propaganda, negotiations and eventually its campaign without any official reference to the National Congress, its choice of the methods of civil disobedience not only earned for it wide recognition throughout India, but also served to identify it in the mind of the people as an offshoot of the Congress Movement.

Now these Mulshi Petah Prisoners had been pouring into the Yerawada jail for many months. Their position was somewhat awkward and perplexing. For while their campaign was

fundamentally political, it had neither been recognised nor sanctioned by the Congress. No wonder then that Government, increased at the rebellious acts of these "*Satyagrahis*" decided to treat them as ordinary criminals on a par with thieves and murderers in all respects. And as these prisoners included within their ranks some leaders and youths of outstanding social position and intellectual abilities, the Mulshi Petah *Satyagrahis* very soon gained the reputation of being the storm centre of Yerawada jail.

It was in February, 1925, that Gandhi was for the first time involved in the Mulshi Petah trouble. He then lived in the old yard. One day he heard that the barbarous punishment of stripes had been meted out to some of these prisoners. His worst suspicions were confirmed, when standing in the open he saw some four or five prisoners dressed in gunny bag uniforms walking with bent figures and in evident pain to their yard. On enquiring, Mr. Gandhi learned that such deterrent punishments were meted out to these prisoners simply because they refused to do mill-stone work, or failed to grind the full quota allotted to them. The news set Mr. Gandhi thinking. He was troubled and in pain. Not so much because such good people had been flogged, but beause they had put to shame their high vocation as *Satyagrahis* by refusing to observe jail discipline.

Mr. Gandhi quickly decided upon his line of action. He would apply for permission to see these prisoners, and would persuade them to scrupulously respect and observe the orders of the jail officials, so as to avoid a repitition of such painful episodes in future. Major Jones, however, refused to grant Gandhi's request in the matter. He was not, however, quite unsympathetic with Mr. Gandhi's point of view obviously because the success of Mr. Gandhi's mission would facilitate the administration of jail. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, always in all emergencies, hit on another method. After dropping a gentle hint to the good Major, he called upon Mr. Jeyramdas (then serving his two years sentence in a cell near by) to approach his compound even at the risk of transgressing the usual limit set for him. So Jeyramdas duly saw Gandhi—though of course from a distance—and he communicated through his faithful followers his message to the Mulshi Petah prisoners. I do not

know if this extraordinary procedure had any quieting effect on the excited nerves of the Mulshi prisoners. But all that it is possible to state is that there was not much heard of these prisoners and their troubles for nearly four months.

But this adventure had a very awkward result. For though the jail superintendent had been duly informed beforehand by Mr. Gandhi of his intention to communicate with Jeyramdas—and had of course meant that Jeyramdas would transgress his usual boundary—he officially punished him for this illegal act by ordering him to be confined within his cell for one week. Gandhi was naturally upset when he heard of this. He spoke to Major Jones about it. But the suave official had no difficulty in explaining that while he remained sympathetic at heart he had no option but to mete out the usual punishment when the matter was brought before him officially by the jail warder. With this the whole episode ended. And yet strange to say the newspapers outside published the sensational news that with a veiw, as it were, to atone for the punishment inflicted on Jeyramdas, Mr. Gandhi, even in the absence of any official punishment, practised solemn penance by confining himself of his own free-will in his cell for a whole week.

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LVII.

A DISCOURSE ON RAMAYANA

I WAS determined to read the great Indian epics and other classics during my stay in jail. And as it would be too difficult and tedious for me to read them all in Sanskrit I generally contented myself with reading the version. So I read the Mahabharat and the Shrimad Bhagwat in Gujarati. I also read the Upanishads with the Sanskrit Commentaries of Shri Shankaracharya, with Professor Bhanu's translations and comments in Mahrathi. But for Ramayana, Mr. Gandhi placed at my disposal (as it was he who kindly lent me the other works too) the Hindi version of the poem rendered by the great poet Tulsidas. He thought very highly of Tulsidas' Ramayana. Some years ago at Kumbhamela (the great fair) he had been asked to name the best book in the world, and he had spontaneously replied—"Tulsi Ramayana".

I knew of Mr. Gandhi's fondness for this classical work. So I began to tackle it, though I found it exceedingly difficult to follow it properly, even with the help of the dictionary that Mr. Gandhi had kindly lent me. The first canto of the work called the Balkand, dealing with the infancy of Rama and his brothers, I found very difficult to understand. I, therefore, discussed the matter one evening with Mr. Gandhi. And getting a bit reminiscent in the course of a long conversation, Mr. Gandhi narrated to me bits of his family history, intermixed with autobiographical details regarding his acquintance with Tulsi Ramayana.

He began the story with his grandfather Uttamchand Gandhi who once held the high position of Prime Minister of the Porbunder State (Porbunder being Mr. Gandhi's birthplace.) As is usual in such cases, Uttamchand Gandhi, called Ota Gandhi, once earned the displeasure of his ruler, and was compelled to leave Porbunder. Mr. Gandhi's family house in his native town still bears the marks of the shots fired at it by the State troops. So he sought refuge in Kutiana and saluted the Nawab of

Junagadh with his left hand. Asked for an explanation, he said:—

"I salute with my left hand for my right hand is already pledged to Porbunder".

"But, have you not quarrelled with your Prince?" asked the Ruler of Junagadh.

"It does not matter. For have I not served him all these years of my life?"

He was then engaged in the service of the Junagadh State for some years. He served the State well and with honour and he finally returned to Porbunder when the Prince of that State was eventually pleased to summon him back to his service.

His father, Karamchand Gandhi, also began his career as a servant of the Porbunder State. At the request of the Political Agent of Rajkote his services were lent as an assessor in the Agency Court. He was presently promoted to the high position of the Diwan of the Rajkote State.

On one occasion he sternly opposed the Political Agent when the Agent made a casual remark in disparagement of his master, the Ruler of Rajkote. Thereupon the Agent sharply took him to task.

"How dare you defy me? Do you know that it is due to my favour that you are appointed the Minister of the State?"

"Be that as it may. But I am the servant of the Prince, and so I will not tolerate any aspersions cast on him".

The Political Agent became angry and ordered him to be immediately arrested. Karamchand, however, remained adamant. He was finally released. But even when cautioned for the future, he boldly said:—

"I will always act as I have done".

Has not Mr. Gandhi obviously inherited from his ascendants something of their heroic and tenacious adherence to truth, even in the face of the gravest danger?

It was one of his ancestors who founded the Ramji Mandir—the Temple of Rama in Porbunder. His uncle made it his home during the day—he only came home to rest at night. His father went further, for in the evening of his life he used to stay there night and day. And it was his father who inaugurated the permanent recital of Tulsi Ramayana in the temple. One Brahmin—Ladharam Shastri—used to recite it in the most melodious voice and commented on it at great length. And it was from these evening recitations of Tulsi Ramayana that young Gandhi developed his first love for the great devotional classic of India.

Incidentally, Mr. Gandhi related the story of an interesting miracle. This Ladharam had suffered from leprosy some years ago. He then stayed in the temple of Bileshwar, situated at a distance of ten miles from Porbunder. To cure himself of the hateful disease he began to apply a paste made out of the Billi leaves offered to the idol of Shiva for prayer. And he used to chant the name of the Rama the whole day. Curiously enough this devotional chant, combined with this magical paste of fallen leaves, succeeded in curing him of leprosy. And thus he became a most ardent devotee of Rama and Tulsi Ramayana.

Mr. Gandhi further cultivated his taste for the Classic when he returned from England to Rajkote as a barrister. He engaged a Brahmin to recite Tulsi Ramayana every evening for the instruction of his children and the whole family. At that time he had found the first two cantos of the Classic very dull and so he had asked the priest to hurry through them.

He reverted for the third time to the same Classic during his stay in South Africa, when he used to recite it himself for the benefit of the intimates of his Tolstoi farm. And he was so deeply impressed with the sterling value of the work that he published a brief summary of the classic in Gujarati in the INDIAN OPINION.

The passage of time, however, had moulded Mr. Gandhi's opinion on the first two cantos of the great Classic. And when he talked to me in jail he confessed that he found nothing more sweet in all literature than the Balkand and Ayodhyakand. I

was also converted to the view when I read the second canto. I found it difficult to restrain my tears more than once as I read the marvellous distance between the Rama and his mother, Kaushalya And when I mentioned my experience to Mr. Gandhi, he remarked :—

"You cannot help shedding tears when you read of the tragic parting between Rama and his brother," though he plainly confessed that it became difficult for him now to shed tears as in the past.

A famous verse in Tulsi Ramayana ends with the work SAT SANG (The Company of the Good). Commenting on it, Mr Gandhi explained that it included the company of good thoughts as well. SAT-SANG at its highest means the discipleship of the True Master. And in this connection it was that Mr. Gandhi once said "I am myself in search of the real *guru*—the true Teacher. At one time I felt that I had secured one in the poet Rajachandra. But eventually I found th. t he did not come up to the standard".

When would he secure the great Teacher ?

"Only when," said Mr. Gandhi, "he was fully qualified to benefit from his company".

"What then must one do," I asked, "till you meet the true Teacher ?"

"One must only console himself in the meanwhile," said Mr. Gandhi, by devoting oneself to the best thoughts and ideal scattered all over the religious classics of the world".

Talking about the religious renaissance in India, once our conversation turned to Sister Nivedita. Like all Indians of the younger generations, I had naturally imbibed the deepest regard and respect for her by reading her writings. But Mr. Gandhi suddenly struck a note of violent dissent. He told me he had seen the great sister on two occasions—first at her flat in Calcutta, and the second time at the residence of Mr. Padshah in Bombay. In Calcutta, however, he was amazed to hear the amiable Sister piling abuses on the whole race of Englishmen. While in Bombay, he was annoyed to see how sister Nivedita

sought to convert Mr. Padshah's mother to the Hindu religion. The old Mrs. Padshah naturally retorted : "Have you not just been converted to the new religion ? Where is then the sense in your asking an old woman like me to change over to your religion of a few years duration ?

That was nearly all—if my memory serves me right—that I got from Mr. Gandhi about the whole movement of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. While he certainly admired the stern ascetism of the members of this religious order, he could not evidently go into ecstasies over it. Possibly on account of his prejudice against sister Nivedita, I am sure there were other reasons too. Any way, the fact remains that Mr. Gandhi being primarily devoted to the emotional cult of Bhakti (Devotion). failed to appreciate the full value of the new religio-philosophical cult founded on the banks of the Ganges.

LVIII

FIGHT FOR FOOD

MR. GANDHI is well-known as a saint and a politician throughout the world. But he is something more. For he claims to be an expert on diatetics and natural cure of disease on which he has written a small book. So he used to take care of our health like a mother, and advise us on food and medicines.

We had often many interesting discussions on these subjects. So one evening our conversation turned on milk diet. I have already narrated the circumstances under which Mr. Gandhi began to take goat's milk after his illness in 1919, even though he had practically taken a life-long vow not to touch milk, as it was, in his opinion, an article of meat diet. Still, though he took goat's milk he did not altogether like it. He was sure, he told us, that a suitable substitute could be found which could give as much nourishment as milk and yet would be as easily digested. "I used to take pea-nuts before," he remarked, "but I cannot digest them any more. I would have loved, indeed, to devote my whole life to make experiments on the subjects with a view to find out some substance (which could probably be extracted from pea-nuts or some other nuts or fruits) which could be equally nutritious and could be more easily digested. I would even have risked experiments on my own body. But somehow, I have come to believe in *Satyagraha* as the chief mission of my life, and I have, therefore, decided to devote all my energies to the propagation of the eternal principle (*Satyagraha* literally means insistence on truth, and includes the settlement of all political and economic questions by peaceful means.) I, therefore, despair of finding the alternative to milk in this life ".

So Mr. Gandhi looked upon *Satyagraha*, and not Swaraj, as the chief goal of his endeavours. And *Satyagraha* for him always includes the gospel of the spinning wheel, which revolves before his imagination as the visible embodiment of the twin principles of truth and peace. So once again, the conflict of purposes

between Mr. Gandhi and the political intelligentsia of India, was clearly revealed to my eyes in the silent seclusion of the jail. For while Mr. Gandhi looks upon India and the whole problem of political independence as an experiment in the practice of the great principle of *Satyagraha*, political India has always looked upon *Satyagraha* as only one of the remedies—perhaps the sovereign remedy—for achieving the high goal of national independence.

To continue, however, with the subjects of diatetics. While he used to prepare and administer simple doses to me to improve my digestion, he naturally felt more anxious to relieve Mr. Ali of the bad blood and the chronic itches that used to worry him all over his frail body. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, began experiments of diatetics and nature cure on him in a thoroughly business-like manner, and was led presently far out of the domains of domestic medicine into the arena of political warfare.

Mr. Gandhi's first prescription for Mr. Ali was to shave the head clean. Naturally he did not worry much over it, as he is himself habituated to do the same—except for a little tuft of hair in the centre of his head. That done, Gandhi got Mr. Ali to apply some sour lime juice and olive oil to his smooth head. This treatment repeated daily gave Mr. Ali some smart burning pain on his head, which he was advised to suffer patiently. Mr. Ali was also asked to leave off salt for a quick cure.

These ministrations, however, brought him no relief. So Mr. Gandhi eventually advised him to go without pulses and vegetables and live on bread, milk and green fruits only. Mr. Ali having agreed to this, the matter was placed before the jail superintendent for necessary changes in his rations. Major Jones at once agreed to give him more milk, but refused to give him any fruits, which were issued to Mr. Gandhi only on medical grounds. But Mr. Gandhi insisted that fruits would be necessary to balance the increased consumption of milk which he was prepared to grant. To this the Major replied : "Not necessarily fruits would not be necessary if Mr. Ali took cold milk." Mr. Gandhi sharply clinched the point and remarked : " All right then,

I will also live on cold milk and will drop fruits from to-morrow." At this the Major got anxious, and urged upon Mr. Gandhi the imperative necessity of continuing fruits to keep up his weak health. But Mr. Gandhi remained firm, and said, "Anyhow, this would be very interesting for me as it would give me an opportunity of making the novel experiment of living on milk only—an experiment which I have often thought of making before".

So Mr. Gandhi began his dangerous experiment of living only on 4 pounds of cold milk daily, while Mr. Ali continued to take solid food as before. As anticipated by us the experiment brought down Gandhi's weight from 104 to 101 in one week, and he became distinctly weaker. This brought Major Jones to his knees. Mr. Gandhi, however, told him, "I am quite prepared to continue the experiment with your permission, as I am not at all worried over the loss of 3 pounds". But the Major had made up his mind. He replied: "No, please, I am not prepared to take any responsibility for the continuance of this dangerous experiment. Please resume fruits and Mr. Ali also can have any fruits he likes". Thus Mr. Gandhi scored his point.

Incredible as it might appear, Mr. Gandhi, the great Mahatma is temperamentally inclined to over-indulgence in eating! And his determination to make his body the vehicle of strenuous exertion in public and personal service has compelled him to impose on himself the discipline of an ascetic by hedging his over-mastering appetite with manifold vows and pledges.

I was indeed surprised at the quantity of food Mr. Gandhi consumed, even before I shared quarters with him in jail. I was amazed, for instance, at the large quantities in which he consumed bananas and pea-nuts, when he used to live on fruit diet. I had also been surprised at the number of *rotis* and the quantities of *dhal* and rice he managed during the Kaira *Satyagraha* period at Nadiad. And has not he himself confessed in his autobiography that it was over-indulgence in wheat porridge prepared by Mrs. Gandhi that brought on a sharp attack of dysentery which nearly brought him to death's door.

It is, therefore, not presumptuous to state that his continuous experiments in food and revolutionary changes in the entire menu

card, coupled with excessive quantities in which he consumed the rations prescribed by himself, must be held responsible for the state of chronic weakness to which his body has been reduced during the past fourteen years.

To come now to Mr. Gandhi's practice and confessions in jail.

It was probably in connection with his family history at Rajkote that Mr. Gandhi sent us into roars of laughter over the gastronomical exploits of a family priest. Mr. Gandhi told us how this man—I forget his name—used to fast completely for two days before-hand, when he was invited to a great feast. No wonder, then, that he consumed the sweet-balls and the inevitable ghee contained in them in astonishing quantities.

But after all of us—and not the least Mr. Gandhi himself—had laughed most heartily over the performances of this and such like members of the priestly class, he suddenly turned the light inwards and exclaimed : "But what right have I to laugh at this poor ignorant Brahmin? Cannot I myself be held guilty of over-indulgence in food ? Do I not myself, to make up for the Sunday fast, take nearly double the quantity of my usual food in the morning ?" And so our conversation naturally took on a more serious turn.

Let me offer in this connection some details of Mr. Gandhi's Sunday fast, which was strangely enough preceded by a jolly good feast in the morning. As is well-known Mr. Gandhi has been practising a twenty-four hours fast—quite contrary to the Hindu custom which generally prescribes a minimum fast of thirty-six hours—on one day in a week. He also observes a day of silence every week. In jail both the days were generally synchronised, and Mr. Gandhi found it convenient to fast as well as to keep silent on Sundays. So he took only one meal on Sunday at about 7 o'clock in the morning, and spent the whole day in spinning and reading.

His Sunday menu, however, was an unusual one. He generally lived, as I have mentioned before, on three pounds of milk and some oranges and lemons. On Sunday, however, while he consumed the same amount of milk and practically

the same quota of fruits, he generally added dry toast to keep fit during the day. Nay more, for Mrs. Gandhi very often used to send or bring him gol-papadi—a kind of wheat cake done of course with butter prepared out of goat's milk. And Mr. Gandhi reserved this delicacy for the Sunday feast. So acting as a chief, I used to cook up a few of these cakes in water, in order to convert them into a species of soft warm pudding which Mr. Gandhi attacked with a vigorous appetite. Thus Mr. Gandhi's own confession regarding over-indulgence on Sunday was not at all exaggerated. Nor, I may add, was even this concession allowed to temper in any degree either the quantity or the variety of the Sunday rations thereafter.

One day Mr. Gandhi received a parcel of green figs—as he used to receive other parcels of many varieties from far and near. Now some figs were either rotten or in the process of decay. As we all sat together for the evenig repast, Mr. Gandhi surprised me by selecting some of the worst figs for consumption, as he thought they would be quite uneatable even the next morning. When I did not dare to challenge Gandhi's choice in the matter, I certainly expressed surprise at it. Mr. Gandhi, however, thought that they would do him no harm, and consumed the bad stuff chosen by him after scrapping off the thoroughly rotten parts as clean as possible.

I had, therefore, a most painful surprise when I found, Gandhi, contrary to custom wrapped up in his bed about 7 o'clock in the morning. "I am verily wounded", explained Mr. Gandhi, in the feeble voice. "Those rotten figs have done it all. I got ill after midnight and have suffered excruciating pain inspite of all my efforts at vomitting and otherwise disposing of the abominable stuff."

Of course, Mr. Gandhi recovered within a day or two. A few week went by. Another parcel of figs came. The figs were much better. Gandhi, as usual, asked me to open the parcel for the evening meal. But as I tendered some to him, Mr. Gandhi said with a humorous twinkle in his eye—"No, thank you. They are not for me. I have decided as a penance for my past mistake to eschew them altogether during my stay in jail." We could not help being amused at this great sacrifice of the Mahatma. Of

course, we pressed him to accept some, as they were really of the best variety. But Mr. Gandhi was firm, and we did not require many words from him to do ample justice to the delicious fruit that he saw generously placed at our disposal.

I will close this subject by narrating the last and the most painful incident. For reasons which will be explained more fully in a subsequent chapter, Gandhi embarked on a semi-fast against what he deemed the most arbitrary action of the jail superintendent. He lived only on milk for four weeks. His weight went down from 103 to 96. Eventually, he succumbed to the joint exhortations of the Superintendent, Colonel Murray, and his companions by resuming the usual fruit diet with milk.

But then he went straight to the other extreme. At the suggestion of Colonel Murray he began to place an excessive strain on his weakened constitution. Besides fruit and milk, he began to take dry toast and even a portion of honey. No wonder then that his delicate constitution could not bear the burden of these heavy rations and succumbed to the fateful illness that took him so suddenly away from the seclusion of the Yarawada jail to his world-famed resort in the Sasoon Hospital for an urgent operation for appendicitis.

LIX

TRUMPHANT FIGHT WITH GOVERNMENT

I now come to the sharpest struggle Mr. Gandhi waged against the authorities in jail.

It was towards the end of June, 1923. Our warder informed Mr. Gandhi, as he was sitting spinning at the wheel, that six Mulshi Petha prisoners had beed flogged by the Superintendent. On coming to him soon after, I found Mr. Gandhi spinning as usual, but deeply ruffled and pained at heart. He conveyed to me the information about the flogging of the prisoners. Presently, our doctor, Mr. Mehta, came to pay his usual visit to Mr. Gandhi. He at first appeared anxious to talk about the flogging incident. Mr. Gandhi listened to him patiently, but when he had finished, he bluntly asked the doctor to make fuller enquiries into the matter and to convey to him as quickly as possible the full details of the whole incident. The doctor presently realised, like us, that Mr. Gandhi was deeply hurt over the incident; and the uncontrollable twiches of the thin muscles of his face, and the fire sparkling from his eyes, convinced us all that he was determined not only to push the inquiries to the finish, but to take some drastic action in the matter. Thereupon the doctor, realising his official responsibility, began to fumble and falter, and he hurried away after making pious promises to Mr. Gandhi in the matter.

Not hearing any more from the doctor on that day, Mr. Gandhi immediately wrote a letter to the Superintendent asking for full details of the floggings. Next morning, Major Jones, accompanied by the Inspector-General of Prisons, visited Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi stood up to honour them, as usual, and respectfully requested a full explanation. The Superintendent explained his conduct quite fully. The Mulshi Petha prisoners had asked for his permission to fast on the holy "Ekadashi" day (the eleventh of the bright half of Ashadha). The Superintendent granted permisssion, on the condition, however that the prisoners should fulfill their usual days tasks. Some,

naturally, failed to finish their work, under stress of hunger and were accorded light punishments. About six Mulshi Petha prisoners, upon hearing of this, decided to go on a strike as a protest against the barbarity of these punishments. Such an act, in the Major's opinion, constituted an open rebellion which no jail authorities could tolerate for an instant. He therefore, had no option but to break that rebellion by administering to them the deterrent punishment of flogging.

It is interesting, indeed, to study how Mr. Gandhi's mind reacted to the explanation. He would not, indeed be human if he did not feel angry over the cruelty of the Superintendent. But his mind was not solely rivetted on the guilt of the official. He was, if possible, even more deadly concerned over the indiscipline of these *Satyagrahas* prisoners, for in his opinion these friends were bound in honour to fulfill the tasks set them in jail. He conceded that a fasting prisoner could not easily finish his task. Even so, he neither preferred to see him struggle with a milstone, and even fainting or dying at its base, than that he should incur punishment for insufficient work. And what even if punishments, light or heavy, were inflicted for breach of jail rules? The *Satyagrahi* was bound in honour to suffer these punishments in silent humility! Under no circumstances then, except where they were singled out for personal humiliation, could they be justified in rebelling as they did against jail discipline.

The matter, however, did not rest there. The militant, hard-boiled warriors of Maharashtra were goaded to a further act of rebellion after the flogging of their colleagues. A few leaders immediately went on a hunger strike. More joined their ranks every day. Within a few days than about thirteen of these prisoners, according to our information, were locked up in solitary cells—just outside the yard where we were confined—for hunger striking against the Government.

All this information leaked into our yard day after day. With every further bit of news Mr. Gandhi became more thoughtful, till finally he decided on his own course of action, and invited me and Mr. Ali to confer on this question in his cell.

It was on the 29th of June that we met in this strange conference. Mr. Gandhi reasoned out as follows:—

"There is only one question that haunts me. What would I do if Devidas or Ba (his wife) were confined in these separate cells under similar punishment? I couldn't get angry with the Superintendent for flogging them; I wouldn't even fast in sympathy with them. But then, would I just sit quiet doing nothing? I know that I have not come here to improve the jail. Nor do I take it as my duty as a *Satyagrahi* to carry on agitation here. But I don't cease to be a human being, even here. Nor can I forget my responsibilty as a servant of humanity. I, therefore, would take it as my imperative duty to reason even with my son and bring him to his senses if I knew that he was suffering on account of his ignorance. This at least is my minimum duty, and the Government is bound to give me facilities to see him.

"But what if the Government does not grant me the necessary permission to see these friends? There would be only one way left open to me—to fast unto death. If I were free I would agitate; take other steps. But here in jail only the sovereign remedy of a death fast confronts me. It would not be aimed, however, against the Government—or even against the Superintendent. It would be designed to soothe the deep agony of my soul, as I could not possibly be a dumb spectator of the sufferings of my friends."

This species of reasoning, and the final act decided on by Mr. Gandhi, struck us nearly dumb. We tried to argue with him. We thought he was wielding a hammer to kill a fly. Mr. Gandhi, we thought, should reserve his mighty weapon of a death fast for better purposes. As usual, he listened to us quite patiently. But his decision remained unchanged.

Having closed the conference, Mr. Gandhi immediately drafted out his letter to the Governor of Bombay and despatched it through the Superintendent. After setting out his view on the question—more or less on the lines mentioned above—Mr. Gandhi addressed two distinct requests to the Government: (1) That he be permitted to see these prisoners to enable him to dissuade them from the hunger strike, and if possible to share quarters with

them in future to prevent a recurrence of such incidents; and (2) to deprive the Superintendent of the power of flogging prisoner without the special permission of the Government, or a Jail Committee that might be appointed for the purpose. And although Mr. Gandhi did not explicitly threaten the Government with a death fast himself, he did inform them that if he did not receive a satisfactory reply within about a week he might be constrained to take some step which, without his intending to do so, might cause embarrassment to the Government.

The prisoners' hunger strike continued. Days lengthened into a week, and even more. Mr. Gandhi continued to discuss this matter quite amicably with the Superintendent, and occasionally with the Inspector-General of Prisons. He appeared quite unruffled on the surface. But the storm continued to brew in the depths of his heart.

Ten days had elapsed, yet the Government had not cared to reply to his letter. It was, if I remember rightly, the morning of a Sunday in the beginning of July, when he told us that he could wait no longer, and he despatched a brief note to the Government, summarily stating that in case of his request not being granted within the next twenty-four hours he would abstain from taking anything but water and salt from Tuesday morning. The Superintendent communicated the letter by telephone to the Secretariat on Monday morning. Both the letters were immediately placed before the Governor of Bombay, and while the Governor did not care to send any direct message to Gandhi, he asked the Superintendent to do everything in his power to persuade Mr. Gandhi to postpone his fast by at least twenty-four hours, as he intended to negotiate with him on the matter.

The Superintendent ran down to our yard in the evening to fulfill his mission. He was a little more excited and restless than usual. He told Mr. Gandhi that the Government was anxiously considering his request, and would like even to negotiate with him. Would he not then postpone his fast ? Gandhi, a past master in the art of diplomacy, promptly asked, had the Governor addressed this request to him personally. Major Jones answered in the negative, but he added that he would himself feel obliged if he would kindly postpone his fast. With his usual

presence of mind, Mr. Gandhi immediately evolved his own condition on which he would be prepared to accede to the Superintendent's wish:

"Would you, Major Jones, make a common cause with me in this matter, and lend your moral support to my request for permission to interview these prisoners?"

Surprised, and a bit angered, at hearing of such a condition the Major pranced to and fro on the stone verandah for a few minutes, then:

"This is, indeed, impossible. As a servant of the Government I cannot possibly lend you support in your fight against the Government".

"Well, then," replied Mr. Gandhi, "my fast begins to-morrow morning".

Smarting at this reply, the Major hurled his last words:

"You know, Mr. Gandhi," he said, "he who runs the race........ ......"runs the risk," retorted Mr. Gandhi, "and I am prepared to run the risk".

At this the Major hurried away from the yard.

That night Mr. Gandhi made his final preparations for what he thought would prove to be a long fast. He decided to concentrate heavily on Hindu religious reading during the continuance of his fast. He would eliminate as far as possible historical, literary and general works. He would, of course, continue his study of Urdu, if only to continue with Maulana Shibli's work on the Companions of the Prophet. He would continue, too, his study of the Old Testament. He would also spin—at least for the first few days until he was utterly prostrated with weakness.

He also anticipated that he would be segregated from us from the next morning. We, therefore, exchanged books and made our final preparations for parting.

True to his word, Mr. Gandhi began his fast at four o'clock next morning. He eschewed the sour lime that he used to put into his first drink of hot water every morning. After offering the

usual prayers, he continued to read in bed. When we all met in the morning at about 7 o'clock the grim reality of the fast struck terror and pain to our hearts. For we missed the fruits that used to lie near Gandhi's bed for his breakfast. Nor was there the tin jail-pot in which he used to receive hot goat's milk from the milk-men every morning. But he himself was his old, cheerful, smiling self.

Presently, the milkmen came on the scene. With a gentle sweep of his hand Gandhi turned them back. One of the two milk-men—an old prisoner who used to reverently bow to Gandhi every morning was distressed beyond measure at this painful surprise. For even on Sundays, when Mr. Gandhi used to observe a twenty-four hour's fast, he used to receive milk as usual. The old man had, however, no alternative but to return with his load of milk. Only a few minutes, however, had elapsed before Major Jones walked into the yard, followed by a small army of sergeants and sub-inspectors and the milkmen. After exchanging the usual greetings the Superintendent expressed his surprise at seeing the milkmen being turned away by Mr. Gandhi.

"Well, you know," said Mr. Gandhi, "I already began my fast at four o'clock this morning".

But, would you not postpone it? said the Superintendent, in a little more human and pleading voice. For his reputation was really at stake. He would make a sorry figure of himself if he could not get Mr. Gandhi to postpone his fast by a day.

"I am even now prepared to postpone my fast," cheerfully replied Mr. Gandhi "and you know my condition".

The Superintendent was lost in thought for a few minutes. All his bulldog pride seemed to sizzle and simmer in his little brain for a short while:

"Well, you want my moral support as a man, isn't it?

"That's all," said Mr. Gandhi.

"Well, you have it," said the Superintendent, with a full consciousness of his success in getting Mr. Gandhi to postpone his fast.

"I will break my fast now; you can give me the milk now, you can also give me the fruit which I did not order yesterday".

The company hurriedly dispersed, and as Mr. Gandhi began taking his breakfast the faces of all prisoners in the yard, the milkmen, the sweepers, the warders and other officers were wreathed in smiles.

The same afternoon Government deputed Mr. Griffiths, Inspector General of Police, to negotiate with the great Mr. Gandhi on the subject. Negotiations were satisfactorily concluded on the next day., Government agreed to permit Gandhi to see the fasting prisoners. They also agreed that no floggings would be permitted in jail except on the special orders of Government.

One of these afternoons I happened to pass Mr. Griffiths on way to my cell. Pointing to his official uniform he said there is the shame of my badge. After enquiring the cause of my imprisonment and measuring my height with his eyes, he said with a twinkle in his eyes:

"Call on me on your release: you might make a smart Police Officer".

What a hope he had!

The last act of this tragedy was enacted in the library room at the back of our yard. Mr. Griffiths was accompanied by the Inspector General of Prisons, as well as Major Jones. Mr. Gandhi was given a seat of honour. Then the two leaders of the hunger-strike, rendered prostrate by a fast of about thirteen days, were carried to the library on the shoulders of the prison warders. As soon as they were set down on the floor they prostrated themselves before the great Mahatma. Mr. Gandhi twitted them on their fast.

"So you have prepared yourselves for death".

"It isn't easy to die" they replied. Mr. Gandhi then went into the philosophy of hunger-strike and had no difficulty in persuading them of the utter futility of hunger striking as a protest against flogging. The devout prisoners were easily brought round by Mr. Gandhi who persuaded them to break their fast, there and then by drinking a little of his goat's milk.

Needless to say all the officers were deeply impressed by the whole spectacle. But perhaps none was more deeply struck with

pain and sorrow as Major Jones, the real villain of the place. He realized perhaps for the first time how he had mistaken these refined and heroic gentlemen for rough and mischievous criminals. As they all got up the penitent Major shook hand with the prisoners and said :—

"I am sincerely sorry for all you had to suffer".

These words came as a soothing balm to the prisoners who had set their hearts on receiving some kind of apology from the Superintendent.

Peace was thus restored in Yerawada Jail after a struggle extending over several weeks. But it had a strange sequel which continued to disturb us for a few weeks more.

Something of the tumult in the jail reached the newspapers and the Superintendent came in for a good bit of public criticism. He was also hauled over the coals by Government for the slackness of his jail administration. For how could Mr. Gandhi have got to know all that happened to the Mulshi Petha prisoners? Smarting under these rebukes and criticism the Superintendent decided to isolate our jail yard as completely as possible. Our warders were now no more allowed such limited access to other yards or to the jail offices on even usual routine business. They as well as the convict servants and finally even our barber were ordered to be confined within our yard at night. Thus it was tried as it were to hermetically seal up our yard and prevent all news and gossip percolating from outside into our yard.

All the warders and servant convicts submitted to these novel restrictions as a matter of course. Our barber, rose up in emphatic revolt against these novel restrictions imposed upon his liberty. Finding the officers adamant against all complaints the barbar, finally decided to strike work. He refused to shave anyone in the yard. The Superintendent thereupon punished him by ordering him to be confined in his cell for seven days. Another barber convict was ordered into the yard. But taking the clue from his predecessor he also followed suit on the plea of temporary insanity. He was also thereupon ordered to be locked up in another cell.

These successive punishments proved indeed too much for Mr. Gandhi's nerves. Assuming as usual full moral responsibility for

all these happening on his own head, Mr. Gandhi decided to go unshaven as a protest against the barbarous punishments inflicted on the two barbers. As he wouldn't, however, like to grow hair on his head he asked the Superintendent for a pair of clippers. When I humbly remonstrated with him on the point he told me with his usual facility that everybody was shaven with clippers in South African jails, as no razors were allowed there. Mr. Gandhi even succeeded in getting Mr. Ali to agree to submit his head to the gentle operations of the clippers. All that he got out of it, however, was that his cheeks and chin were sorely pinched while not a single hair was removed. Nor did the clippers prove more efficacious during their passage on Gandhi's close cropped skull.

A week thus passed. His signal failure then dawned fully on Mr. Gandhi's mind. The Superintendent as usual pressed him to have a good nice shave, so he eventually surrenderd. And as the new barber behaved better than his predecessors we had no more troubles on this score.

All the time Mr. Gandhi evidently forgot that whatever the reasons for these novel restrictions, the barber would, in any case, be required in our yard to shave about a dozen servants and warders even if he could get on with clippers.

LX.

A DEFEAT.

Major Jones was replaced by Colonel Murray during October 1923. The new Colonel had earned an unenviable reputation in the Andman jail. He was said to have tamed the Bengal tiger. The ordinary prisoners knew him as Bakri Sab (the goat officer). For he crept into their yard as quietly as a goat to spy on them.

Our third companion, Mr. Ali, was transferred to a North Indian jail, preparatory to his release towards the end of October. Presently a new Mohammedan friend, Mr. Abdul Gani, was ushered into our yard. As Editor of the "Khilafat Daily" he had been sentenced for sedition. While we were all happy to have him with us, Mr. Gandhi was jubilant over his arrival as he could again continue his studies which had been interrupted by the transfer of Mr. Ali.

According to his usual custom Mr. Gandhi prepared the menu card for Mr. Gani in consultation with him, and presented it to the new Superintendent. After giving it his careful consideration Col. Murray finally refused to sanction it. His argument was quite simple : "I am not authorized," he firmly told Mr. Gandhi, "to spend a pie more than the amount sanctioned by Government for the special division prisoners. I will, therefore, sanction only so much as might be allowed under the regulations. Mr. Gani, however, will be at liberty to buy any extra rations at his own expense".

These words set Mr. Gandhi boiling. "Your predecessors", argued Mr. Gandhi," have always sanctioned the rations settled by us. We cannot possibly tolerate any invidious distinction that you might make between us and our new friend". You are an invalid," replied the Colonel and you are, therefore, entitled to special rations. And though "I would not change the food scale fixed for any prisoner by my predecessor, I cannot on my

own authority, sanction anything for new prisoners in excess of the regulations".

These words hurt Mr. Gandhi to the quick as he was convinced that his rations were fixed more in deference to his own habits than to his medical needs. He, therefore, decided to eschew the luxury of all fruit diet and live exclusively on milk. He postponed his experiment for about two weeks pending final orders of the Inspector-General of Prisons. Finally, Mr. Gandhi embarked, after giving due notice to Government, on his most risky and fateful experiment.

Our worst predictions soon proved true. Within a week Mr. Gandhi's weight went down from 104 lbs. to 101 lbs. The Superintendent while keeping firmly to his dicta on Mr. Gani's rations, began to tempt Mr. Gandhi with redoubled offers of the most expensive and delicious fruits. "How could I," answered Mr. Gandhi, "entertain any thought of taking fruit while my companion is forced to go hungry on insufficient milk and sugar ?"

The Superintendent again pleaded his inability to do more for him and retired.

Within four weeks Mr. Gandhi's weight dropped down to 97 pounds. Col. Murray getting a little nervous at the increasing weakness of his distinguished prisoner grew more insistent than ever on his resumption of fruit diet. Finding him adamant on the point, the Col. persuaded him to try a little bread. Mr. Gandhi then put on ten pounds on new ration. But he couldn't digest it any more. And the end of the sixth week found Mr. Gandhi very weak with his weight at 96 pounds. At this we all got really frightened. We unanimously assured Mr. Gandhi that as the limit of his experiment was now reached he should now resume fruit diet without delay. He, however, consoled us with soft words, and asked us not to worry until his weight was down to 90 pounds.

Meanwhile some kind friends sent a basket of fruit to Mr. Gandhi. He quietly turned them over to us. We, however, firmly refused to partake of them if Mr. Gandhi wouldn't even taste them. So be just tasted one. And that was all.

A week more passed. When I went to him one morning he told me lying in bed "I feel that the limit of my experiment has now been reached. My hands trembled this morning while holding a jug of water. I have, therefore, decided to resume fruit." He had an interview with Mrs. Gandhi the same afternoon. He told her everything about his semi-fast of six weeks. Like a true Hindu wife, she begged him on bended knees to resume fruits without delay. On her seeing Col. Murray on the matter, she told him in broken English : "My husband always mischief".

Next morning Mr. Gandhi boldy confessed his defeat to Col. Murray. It was a bitter cup for him to swallow. Never before had such determined action on his part ended in such a dismal failure. For the Col. did not swerve even by a hair's breadth from his own path. He did not add an ounce of milk or sugar to Mr. Gani's rations. And yet Mr. Gandhi had no option but to ask for his usual basket of fruit. Col. Murray went even one better. He carefully impressed upon Mr. Gandhi the need of extra diet to make up for his dangerous weakness. So he agreed to take half a pound of bread and even one ounce of honey every morning. The fast was thus truly consummated with a daily feast.

Scarcely had Mr. Gandhi lived on this new diet for about two weeks when he was caught in the grip of a fateful disease. It was the 5th January, 1924. I saw our warder, Gangaba, preparing plenty of hot water in the early morning. I learned from him that Mr. Gandhi was suffering from shivering sensations. I quickly went to see him when I found him lying quietly in bed. On enquiring, he told me in a very low voice : "I have suffered all night from intense pain in the stomach, I had not a moment of sleep, I have taken purgatives and I tried to vomit. But all in vain".

Next morning the pain subsided. On the third day he recovered from fever. In a few days he appeared to be on his way to recovery. Within a few days, however, he suffered a relapse. The pain in the stomach began to gradually focus on one tender spot. Col. Maddock of the Sassoon Hospital came to examine him. Appendicitis was hinted at. For a couple of days, however, we heard no more of it.

On the 12th January Mr. Gandhi whispered in my ears, as I approached his bed: "The pain seems to be getting chronic. I am afraid I will have to be removed to Hospital". I conveyed those words to Dr. Mehta who passed them on to Col. Murray. The Colonel was also struck with Gandhi's serious condition. He rang up Col. Maddock. We scented Gandhi's departure in the air. He dictated elaborate instructions about his books and clothes, spinning wheel and cotton yarn. We postponed other matters till the afternoon.

Presently, Col. Maddock walked into the yard followed by a host of jail officials. He duly examined Mr. Gandhi and decided to take him immediately to Hospital to operate on him for appendicitis. Presently we heard the sound of his car. It was brought right to the gate of our jail yard. We all helped to carry Mr. Gandhi in his bed to the car. As his pillows were arranged on the seat, Mr. Gandhi quickly jumped in with all his usual alertness. And he was carried away while exchanging greetings with the whole population of the yard—the European prisoners, the warders, the convict servants, and the jail officials who turned out to bid him a hearty farewell.

The operation was successfully performed on the same day. Mr. Gandhi quickly recovered and Government tactfully made his illness an excuse for releasing him in the beginning of February 1924—nearly full four years before the expiry of his six years' sentence.

LXI

CONGRESS FOR COUNCILS.

IT now remains for me to summarise, however briefly, the main events of 1923-24 to realise the full significance of the political situation that faced Mr. Gandhi on his release from jail.

It will be recalled that Mr. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru failed to carry the Gaya Congress with them on the issue of the Council Entry. "The Controversy, however," writes Babu Rajindra Prasad in his introduction to the second volume of YOUNG INDIA, "did not end with the success of the Congress. Deshabandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and others formed a party of those who favoured the Council Entry and named it the Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party. In the Programme of that party the demand which occupied the most prominent place was of course the one relating to Council Entry. It was stated that the party would set up candidates for seats in the Legislative Council and the Assembly, and on being elected they would present on behalf of the country its legitimate demands for acceptance and fulfilment by the Government within a reasonable time. In case the demands were not granted, the party would adopt a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction with a view to make Government by the Council impossible and that in no case would any of the members of the party accept office. Other demands related to the capture of Municipal District and Local Boards, Organisation of Labour, Boycott of British Goods, formation of a federation of Asiatic countries and according support of the party to the constructive programme of the Congress regarding Swadeshi, Khaddar, Temperance, Untouchability, National Education and settlement of disputes by arbitration".

Lest, however, the division of the Congress into two factions of No-Changers (Orthodox followers of the original programme of non-co operation) and Pro-Changers (members of the new Swarajya Party) might block up all work, the All India Congress

Committee resolved in January 1923 to suspend all discussions and recriminations on the Council question, pending the issue of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that the No-Changers—inspite of their melodramatic efforts for recruiting volunteers—had no serious desire of launching on any campaign of Civil Disobedience. Just an accident helped them to rally their forces in the country and to boost the fallen fortunes of their party.

Punctually on the 30th April, settled in advance for the resumption of the campaign, of certain local leaders of Nagpur under the leadership Seth Jamnalal Bajaj announced their intention of carrying a flag in procession through the City and the Civil Lines, Government, true to its traditions of prestige, banned the entry of the procession within the limits of the Civil Station. The leaders were thus left no option but to offer civil resistance to the Government order. As the first few processionists were arrested the movement was pushed on with might and main. Volunteers began to pour into Nagpur not only from the Central Provinces but from the distant parts of India. Different Provinces and even cities began to vie with each other in sending big contingents to the new battlefield. Within about two months nearly 2,000 persons were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

Presently the leaders of Swarajya Party were placed on the horns of a serious dilemma. They would be condemned by the united voice of the nation if they did not join hands with the No-Changers in taking up the challenge thrown out by Government. But if they did join their comrades in jail what would happen to their new party, and to the programme of capturing the Council seats at the next election? Mr Vithalbhai Patel, however, cut the Gordian knot by rushing down to Nagpur at a psychological moment and effecting a compromise which was universally acclaimed as honourable to both sides.

When the All India Congress Committee met in Bombay towards the end of May the Swarajists won a notable victory. It was agreed that no propaganda would be carried on among voters in furtherance of the boycott of Councils. Whereupon

the No-Changers resigned their seats on the Congress Working Committee and were easily replaced by Swarajist leaders. The tables were thus turned on the No-Changers who were routed from the Congress Executive inspite of their success at the last Congress.

The All India Congress Committee met again in July at Nagpur. The Satyagraha campaign had by this time concluded. The issue of Civil Disobedience was now universally acknowledged to be dead for good. The No-Changers had neither any political programme nor any consuming appetite for giving a peaceful battle to Government. But the Swarajists could not contest the coming elections in November 1923 without obtaining a fresh mandate from the Congress. The Committee, therefore decided to hold a special session of the Congress at Delhi.

The special Congress was held on the 15th September under the presidentship of Moulana Abul Kalam Azad. Mr. Mohamed Ali who had just been released from jail, dominated the Councils of the No-Change Party, while Messrs. Das and Motilal Nehru led the forces of the Swarajya Party. The Congress passed an agreed Resolution according liberty to such Congress men as had no religious or other conscientious objection to stand as candidates and exercise their rights of voting in the Council elections. Thus the Swarajya Party not only got the sanction of the Congress to enter the Councils but succeeded in securing the great prestige of the Congress and even Mr. Gandhi to back them in their contest at the polls. At the same time the Congress was persuaded to register its pious faith in the ordinary programme of non-co-operation with a viw to enable the nation to embark on a fresh campaign of Civil Disobedience in the distant future. In point of fact, however, the rock bottom of the whole militant programme was knocked out by the decision of the Delhi Congress for many years to come.

Reference must be made at this stage to the recrudescence of Hindu-Mohammedan dissensions from the middle of 1922—soon after the incarceration of Mr. Gandhi. Government obviously took advantage of the collapse of the whole militant movement to placate communal factions and leaders with a view to evoke

clashes between their fanatical followers. The religious prejudices and passions which were so successfully exploited by the Congress Leaders in waging a common war against Government in 1920-22 were now effectively evoked in the service of fratricidal conflicts and skirmishes.

The Delhi Congress was soon followed by elections to the Legislature. The Swarajists used the united resources of their party and Congress for sweeping the polls. In the Central Provinces and Bengal they obtained a decisive majority. While in other Provincial Councils as well as the Indian Legislative Assembly, the Swarajists secured a substantial number of seats and formed the largest single party.

In Decembsr 1923 the annual session of the Congress met at Coconada under the presidency of Mr. Mahomed Ali. The Congress practically re-affirmed the Delhi Resolutions regarding Council Entry, And strangely enough the pious formula of triple boycott was also re-affirmed by the Congress.

It is further significant that the question of altering the creed of the Congress in such a manner as to lay down Complete Independenae as the goal of India's political endeavour was again brought forward at this Congres. But it was turned down by the united majority of the Swarajists and No-Changers.

Mr. Das secured a permanent majority in the Bengal Legislative Council by making a timely pact with the Mohammedan members. Thus in Bengal as well as in the Central Provinces the Swarajists succeeded in throwing out the Budget and dismissing the ministers. The Government, however, in both Provinces could not be made impossible as the Constitution reserved ample powers to the Governor to run the administration without the ministers. The Swarajists, however, staged their most spectacular struggle in the new Legislative Assembly which was formally opened by Lord Reading at Delhi on January 31, 1924. The Swarajists easily formed a coalition with the Independent Party and formed a permanent majority in the Assembly. A battle royal was waged on a Resolution moved by Pandit Motilal Nehru who demanded the convocation of a Round Table Conference to recommend a scheme for the establishment of a full

responsible Government in India. After a debate lasting over three full days Pandit Nehru's motion was carried by 64 votes against 48, practically all the elected members of the house entering the lobby in its support.

By a strange irony of fate Mr. Gandhi was prematurely released from the Yerawada Prison in the early beginning of February 1924. As soon as he became convalescent he hastened to express in a public letter his adherence to the original plan of triple boycott—including that of the Councils. Such a sudden intrusion of Mr. Gandhi in the political arena created a most delicate situation for the Swarajists in the Assembly. They, however, succeeded in persuading Mr. Gandhi, pending his final decision, to suffer them to continue their work in the Legislature.

Government then suffered defeat after defeat in the Assembly. Pandit Nehru's motion for the rejection of the first demands. in the Budget was carried for the first time in the Assembly. Similarly, leave to introduce the Finance Bill was refused by 60 against 57 votes. Moreover, Swarajist Resolutions for the repeal of the regulation III of 1818, for the imposition of a countervailing duty on South African coal, and the appointment of a Committee to enquire into the Sikh situation, were passed by the Assembly in the teeth of Government opposition.

Flushed with his resounding victories in the Assmbly at Delhi, Pandit Nehru ran down to see Mr. Gandhi at Juhu—a seaside suburb near Bombay—in the early beginning of April. The conversations lasted for many weeks. The astute Pandit wanted Mr. Gandhi's full backing and support for Sawarjist fight in the Council. Mr. Gandhi on the other hand refused to swerve by a hair's breadth form the original programme of the triple boycott of courts, schools and councils and sternly asked the Pandit and his party to leave the Council on pain of being expelled from the Congress Executive.

These prolonged negotiations proved inclusive. And both parties then prepared to cross their swords in the ensuing session of the All India Congress Committee which was to be held at Ahmedabad in the last week of June 1924.

LXII

MR. GANDHI IN TEARS

MR. GANDHI resumed the editorship of "Young India" on the 3rd April 1923. And we could easily discern his plans and programme for Congress work from the columns of his paper long before the eventful meeting of the All India Congress Committee.

In the very first article published in the first issue of his paper he hastened to re-iterate his undiminished faith in his old plan. "Nor have I any new message" he wrote, "to deliver to the reader.. ......I have no new programme. My faith in the old is just as bright as ever, if not brighter".

Mr. Gandhi, however, took some time to decide on his line regarding the Congress Organisation. He hurriedly went through the history of the Congress during the two years of his incarceration. He learned more perhaps from his personal conversation with his most devoted followers of the No-Change Party. Nor did he stint either time or patience in covering the entire political field during his discussions with Pandit Nehru and other leaders of the Swarajya Party.

Mr. Gandhi, however, as is well known, is a man of fixed ideas. Spinning nearly four hours every day during the last two years, he had apparently made up his mind to convert the Congress into a spinning organisation. His logic was quite simple. Non-violent non-co-operation indeed remained the motto of his politics. While the country was aching for some political activity on the basis of Non-Co-operation Mr. Gandhi was now more than ever determined to instill the very quint essence of non-violence in the minds of the people. Non-co-operation without non-violence appeared to him immoral and suicidal. For he found the atmosphere fully surcharged with the poison of mental and moral violence—as was fully evidenced by the prevailing Hindu-Mohammedan discussions and riots. And he deemed nothing more potent than the spinning wheel for clearing the air.

Nor could he forget that he had been the virtual dictator of the Congress till the very moment of his arrest. True he had met with thunder-storms during the All India Congress Committee meeting of February 1922. The opposition had suddenly reared up its head to pass a vote of censure on Mr. Gandhi for his retreat at Bardoli. But he had successfully weathered the storm. So he now set out to undo—as if by waving a magic wand—the mistakes and mischef of the last two years and to straighten out the tangled skein of Congress politics by enthroning on the Congress Executive only those of his sanctimonicous followers who retained their faith undimmed in the triple boycott.

In his inquisitorial article on Congress organisation (" Young India," 29th May 1924)—truly reminiscent in its scholastic casuistry of the Christian fathers of the middle age—Mr. Gandhi wrote : " That the Executive organisation of the Congress must not contain titled persons, Government school-masters, practising lawyers, and members of Legislative bodies and persons who used foreign cloth or cloth manufactured in our own mills, and those who deal in such cloth".

The very next week he hastened to administer a second bitter pill. "I should, therefore, suggest," wrote Mr. Gandhi, "that the (elected) member should, at the end of every month, send yarn of their own spinning, at least ten tolas of at last ten counts of even and well-twisted yarn. The yarn should reach the Secretary not later than the 15th of each month. He who fails to send the requisite quantity should be deemed to have resigned".

One the 19th June 1924, Mr. Gandhi went one step further. He published a series of draft Resolutions which he proposed to place before the All-India Congress Committee. The measure of his new infatuation for the spinning wheel (which was perhaps for the first time now so thoroughly unrelated to any plan of imminent or even prospective militant campaign) may be gauged from the fact that he gave the very first place to his Resolution on compulsory spinning. His third Resolution virtually sought to expel from all elective bodies, the Swarajist members of the Council even though they had acted in complete accordance with

the Resolutions of the Delhi and Coconada sessions. His last and fourth Resolution sought to express regret at the assassination of a British Officer, Mr. Day, by a Bengal revolutionary. Armed with these Resolutions Mr. Gandhi virtually challenged the Swarajists to a trial of strength on the battlefield of his own choice.

I was privileged to be present at the historic meeting of the All India Congress Committee, which was held in the Municipal Hall of Ahmedabad towards the end of June 1924. Having succeeded in securing the approval of the Working Committee, Mr. Gandhi proceeded to place his first Resolution about compulsory hand-spinning before the meeting. No sooner had Mr. Gandhi finished than the Swarajist members led by Messrs. Das and Nehru opened the flood gates of their impassioned eloquence against Mr. Gandhi's proposition. They discovered in the penalty clause Mr. Gandhi's unveiled and autocratic desire to expel the Swarajists from all positions of power in the Congress Organization. No wonder then that Mr. Gandhi felt that " the proceedings of the All India Congress Committee reminded me of those at Delhi just before I was imprisoned......The disillusionment of Delhi awaited me at Ahmedabad.

Messrs. Das and Nehru, however, went one step further than the Opposition leaders of 1922. Mr. Gandhi, they knew, was sure to win a numerical majority in his own home town. They, therefore, threatened to stage a walk-out from the meeting before the fiat of virtual explusion was passed against them. And as Mr. Gandhi remained unmoved the Swarajists left the meeting in a body before the spinning Resolution was put to vote.

Being an orthodox No-Changer I retained my seat. And I saw the grim spectre of a National tragedy descending on the meeting. Even the hardest No-Changers felt benumbed in the presence of such a disastrous walk-out. All asked within themselves " What would the country say about the dismissal of such valiant patriots like Das and Nehru from the National Congress ?" Nobody, however, dared to express such sentiments. The meeting proceeded to vote. The spinning Resolution was carried by 37 votes.

But even Mr. Gandhi felt heart-broken and he adjourned the proceedings of the meeting with a view to negotiate privately with Messrs. Das and Nehru on the draft Resolutions.

The negotiations were carried on throughout the next day. The result was a foregone conclusion. Deprived of Das and Nehru the Congress would be renounced to a religious organisation of mediæval spinners. Bereft of Mr. Gandhi's magnetic personality on the other hand, the writ of the Congress would not run through the country. The Congress had, therefore to be run so as to accommodate both parties,—Gandhian-No-Changers and Swarajist Pro-Changers. The motto of live and let live, was again implicitly accepted by the two parties—as at Delhi and Coconada. The Swarajists agreed to the principle of compulsory spinning for all elected members, provided the penalty clause expelling non-spinners from offices was deleted. They also agreed to support the principle of the Five Boycotts provided that the Swarajist members elected to the Councils in lieu of the Delhi and Coconada Resolutions were not to be deemed guilty of the breach of the Boycott of Councils. *Status quo ante* was virtually proclaimed by both the parties while Mr. Gandhi could have the consolation of having the principle of compulsory spinning accepted by the Congress Committee.

The two Resolutions thus settled by compromise were duly placed befere the committee and carried with the united acclamations of both the parties. But Mr. Gandhi could not conceal it from himself that he failed in his purpose and suffered a series of defeats. "The first Resolution (regarding hand spinning) is bereft of the penalty clause." It was my first defeat in a series......" The third Resolution (regarding the observance of five-fold boycott) constitutes real failure." "Young India," 3rd July 1924).

But Mr. Gandhi's discomfiture did not end here. A battle royal was staged on Mr. Gandhi's Resolution condemning the political murder of Mr. Day. Mr. Das sought by his amendment to show warmer consideration for the thoughts and feelings of the Bengal revolutionary school. His amendment was, however, defeated by 78 against 70 votes and Mr. Gandhi's original Resolution was then carried by the meeting.

"The Gopinath - Saha" Resolution clinched the issue. The speeches, the result and the scenes I witnessed after was a perfect eye-opener. I undoubtedly regard the voting as a triumph for Mr. Das although he was apparently defeated by 9 votes. That he could find seventy supporters out of one hundred and forty-eight who voted had a deep significance for me . . . The Resolution completed my defeat". ("Young India"—3rd July 1924).

This series of unexpected defeat proved indeed too exacting for Mr. Gandhi's strained nerves. A political leader of his eminence making his debut for the first time in a Congress meeting after two years of imprisonment and barely recovered from a dangerous illness would be less than human if he did not hope to secure a sweeping victories instead of such humiliating defeats.

But the cup of his humiliation was not yet full. Mr. Gandhi had promised to save some of his litigant followers from the clutches of the new section as he had already saved the Swarajist Councillors. No sooner, however, had he read his Resolution of exemption than his own devoted followers began to oppose and attack him. One of them appealed to the Prasident on a point of order. He ruled out Mr. Gandhi's Resolution as unconstitutional.

The rest of this striking episode may be best described in Mr. Gandhi's own words. "Then I sank within me. I felt that God was speaking to me through them and seemed to say: "Thou fool knowest thou that thou art impossible ..Thy time is up'. In a short speech in Hindustani I lay bare my heart and let them see the suppress tears even when there is occasion for them. But inspite of all my efforts to be brave I broke down utterly....I saw that I was utterly defeated and humbled".

LXIII

SHAMEFUL COMPROMISE

THE reader will excuse me, I hope, if I hark back a little at this stage to set down my re-actions to these political development. For I got so sick of the hypocritical compromise effected at the A. I. C. C. meeting that I felt constrained to sever my last lingering connection with the Congress organisation in Gujarat and to bid good bye to Ahmedabad after seven eventful years.

Like most ex-prisoners, I suffered from a species of hysterical nervousness for some months after I was released from jail on 13th March 1924. As I felt gradually relieved from the overwhelming oppression of new images and impressions crowding on me from all sides, I picked up the threads of my literary and educational activities. I also resumed the editorship of the Gujarati magazine 'Yugadharma.' On studying the sequence of events during the preceding year I began to realise the full magnitude of the political landslide that had taken place after the Gaya Congress. And the fires of political discontent that had been smouldering within me against the zigzag course of the Gandhian movement—which had leapt out into intermittent flames in 1920 (when I resigned the sub-editorship of Navjivan) and in 1921 (when I resigned the secretaryship of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee) were now fanned to a fresh blaze by my review of the Swarajist movement.

Still the year of jail life oppressed me like a nightmare for sometime. Labouring under such a shadow I began to idealise—almost deify—Mr. Gandhi. Friends pressed me to publish my impressions of our jail life in the pages of our magazine. I began a series of articles on his life and battles in jail. And so effectively did they conceal the deeper tumult in my mind, that they were warmly applauded in the most orthodox circles of Mr. Gandhi's Ashram though an unmistakable vein of subtle irony ran through them.

Having thus relieved myself of the agony of jail life I braced myself to discuss and dissect the political philosophy of the Swarajist party. After a whole year of political quietude my first approaches to the subject were bound to be very cautious. Even so I set out to tackle the question as an objective student rather than as a confirmed no-changer. No wonder, then, that my articles surprised and bewildered my friends who broke out in mild murmurs of restrained criticism.

My line was very simple. I designated the whole Swarajist movement as the revolt of the political intelligentsia of the country against the cast-iron doctrine of non-co-operation. The Congress and the country had been pursuaded to adopt the so-called construction programme—including the magical spinning wheel—as sign-posts leading directly to the high road of peaceful rebellion. The very idea of the rebellion—call it civil disobedience or passive resistance—was now put off for good. Even the Nagpur storm had blown over without leaving any whirlwind in its wake. Shorn thus of even a semblance of political militancy the spinning programme—however useful or necessary—must necessarily be relegated to the category of humanitarian service. Was it then strange, I argued, that the political leaders, dismayed at the wilderness in which they were landed after two years of Gandhian non-co-operation, harked back precisely to the very programme of wrecking the Councils, that Mr. Das had outlined at Calcutta in September 1920? Mr. Gandhi then promised to lead the Nation on his own terms in a straight fight against the Government. Mr. Das and his colleagues of the Swaraj party followed the new Messiah with a zeal and devotion that amazed the world. The great experiment had, however, failed for the moment. And now that the method of non-co-operation was sought to be enthroned as a goal in itself and crystallized into a ritualistic Shastra, the political intelligentsia broke loose from the coils of a novel orthodoxy to carve out an intelligible path for attacking Government.

While I was thus engaged in my objective analysis of the Swarajist policy, I heard ugly rumours of Mr. Gandhi's proposal of compulsory spinning. I quickly discounted it. So optimistic I was of his gentle tactics of moving everybody by persuasion !

But presently he left no room for doubt. His articles on compulsory spinning and the expulsion of the Swarajists from the Congress Executive left me bewildered and dumb-founded. I remember reading one of the articles with Dr. Sumant Mehta in Surat. We discussed the matter long and anxiously. We both came to the deliberate conclusion, that holding the opinion we did on the political situation, we could no longer evade our solemn responsibility of hitting straight and hard at the Mahatma's proposals that were designed to reduce the Congress to a mediæval order of sanctimonious spinners.

I knew the risk I ran. In 1921 I had fought on comparatively minor issues with a close coterie of Mr. Gandhi's lieutenants. But now I had to fight it out with the great leader himself. I was at the parting of the ways. I could subordinate my views to those of the majority and continue as a discontented and disconsolate member of a holy brotherhood of Gujarat; or I would have to face universal obloquy from the devoted band of my dearest colleagues of the past seven years and suffer a complete eclipse of my political career. I preferred to listen to the small voice within and left the Holy City of Ahmedabad and the fair land of Gujarat for "Fresh fields and pastures new".

The A. I. C. C. meeting completed my disillusionment. I had pictured Mr. Gandhi and the Swarajists as a hard boiled doctrinaire, and supple opportunists respectively. The first, I thought, was thoroughly wedded to the Charkha as the latter were to the Councils. The clash was indeed inevitable. It would have been honourable to both if either party would have secured a decisive majority or converted the other to its views. The curtain was however, rung down on a most ignoble compromise. Mr. Gandhi agreed, though under continued protest, to allow the Swarajists on the Councils. The latter on the other hand pledged themselves to the principle of spinning which they used to treat in private with undisguised scorn and laughter.

I then used to compare the dialectical feast of contending leaders to the logic-chopping performances of our ancient Pandits who always exercised their greatest ingenuity in reading novel interpretations into old texts. Both Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Das had now difficulty in accommodating their new goods in the old wagon of

the non-co-operation movement. And both agreed to drive the same engine in two different directions and under diverse controls while their camp followers were perpetually engaged in a casuistical warfare and the Hindu and Mohammedan fanatics treated them both to their intermittent fireworks.

Had I been conversant with the doctrines of Marx and Lenin I would have visualized the warring elements in a more correct perspective. The leading figures in the Ahmedabad drama were all loyalists. As such they continued like the liberal class-brothers outside the Congress, to serve as the unpaid champions of the capitalist and the bourgeois order of society. By fixing on the spinning wheel as the panacea of all ills, Mr. Gandhi desired to seal the chain of the eternal dependence of the agrarian masses on the generosity of their class enemies—the Merchants and the Money-lenders, the Mill-owners and the Stock-brokers—to stave off the day of their rebellion. The Swarajists were on their side thoroughly justified indeed in turning down the slogan of the Boycott of Councils after "the overflowing revolutionary energy of the masses" had ceased to seek and find "a direct outlet other than constitutional channels". But, they, too, sought to delude the poor masses when they promised to bring down the machinery of Government by their wrecking tactics in the Councils. Inspite of their apparent differences both parties were thus firmly united in their capitalist outlook and in their unflinching faith in the existing social order. And as both now shed their revolutionary slogans of destroying the Satanic system of Government, their reformist outlook enabled them to seek further alliances with other capitalist parties outside the Congress.

Nor did Mr. Gandhi take much time in proclaiming his fundamental unity with the Swarajist party. Almost on the very morrow of the A.I.C.C, meeting he sought to wash out the bitter memories of the acrimonious discussions by according the most friendly greetings to Pandit Motilal Nehru. On meeting him after a few days Mr. Gandhi assured him that "it would be disastrous if the Swarajist retired from the Councils at this stage" and that even "so far as the A.I.C.C. is concerned the Swarajist position has never been so strong as it is now." When the astute Pandit reminded him of his recent efforts to convince the Swarajists of the error of their ways, Mr. Gandhi promptly replied that he saw no contradiction

between the two positions and that while the one statement was permanent and based on principle, the other was applicable to the immediate present only and was based on experience. And while Pandit Nehru was only too glad to secure the whole-hearted moral support of Mr. Gandhi for his campaign in the Councils, the latter was already engaged in evolving novel formulas for unchaining the ship of the Congress from the tentacles of non-co-operation for steering it far and wide to establish the universal Empire of the spinning wheel.

To Mr. Gandhi's precipitate descent down the inclined plane of counter-revolution, we will now turn.

LXIV

IN THE SERVICE OF THE SPINNING WHEEL.

HOWEVER much he tried, Mr. Gandhi could not reconcile in his conscience the doctrine of non-co-operation-cum-boycott with the Swarajist policy in the Councils. He had intended to oust the impious politicians from all positions of power in the Congress. He had miserably failed. Nor did he hope to attempt the impossible in the future. For the Swarajists would rather leave the Congress in a body than remain in it under a badge of shame, and shorn off the Swarajists the Congress would thoroughly expose to the public gaze the political nakedness of its spinning programme. So the tumult raged unabated in Mr. Gandhi's heart. At last he boldly decided to give a go-bye to the empty formula of non-co-operation if only he could secure a much vaster band of worshippers at the shrine of the spinning wheel.

His argument was apparently logical. What remained of the boycott of Legislative Councils if the best leaders of the Congress were to be allowed to occupy seats in the hated Councils ? What was the worth of the boycott of Law Courts when the landlords and merchants entrenched in the Congress Committees were filing and defending suits in the Government Law Courts ? Either the offending delinquents should be ousted from the Congress Executives, or the Boycott—torn and tattered at a thousand points—should be officially relinquished. And as the first plan failed Mr. Gandhi quickly decided to give a ceremonial burial to the boycott programme.

But Mr. Gandhi is a shrewd bargainer. He does not give something for nothing. So he made his new proposal subject to a sovereign condition. While the Ahmedabad Resolution imposed the duty of daily spinning on the members of the Congress Committees Mr. Gandhi would now compel all the thousands of Congress members to spin daily and to send a monthly quota of yarn to the Congress office. In brief he would suspend the boycotts if the Swarajists agreed to the incorporation of a full-fledged spinning franchise in the very heart of the Congress

Constitution. Not Boycott or non-co-operation, not Civil Disobedience or passive resistance, but hundred per-cent Charkha would be the clarion call of the new Congress.

Mr. Gandhi thus sought to kill two birds with one stone. Firstly, the new franchise would promote perhaps a hundred-fold the khaddar industry in the land. And secondly, he could now invite the co-operation of the Liberals and other Constitutionalists who had fled from the Congress for fear of the N.C.O. programme. Little did he perhaps himself realise that he was really seeking to strengthen the counter-revolutionary front by allying the Congress not only with the capitalist and middle classes but even the landlord and the Princes on the illusory basis of the spinning wheel.

His mind thus made up, Mr. Gandhi did not allow any grass to grow under his feet. Writing in "Young India" under the the heading "One Programme" on the 10th July 1924, Mr. Gandhi broached the subject in the following terms :—

"Friends have asked me to suggest one universal programme in which Rajahs, Maharajahs, No-changers, Pro-changers, Liberals, Independents, practising lawyers, Anglo-Indians and all others could join without reserve........The most effective and swiftest programme I can suggest is the adoption and organisation of khaddar, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and removal by the Hindus of untouchability. It is my unalterable belief that if these three things are achieved, we can establish Swaraj without the slightest difficulty.........

"If, therefore, the country as a whole adopts this three-fold programme, I would be prepared to advise the suspension of the Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience for a period of one year."

Having settled these premises and studied the reactions of the party leaders, Mr. Gandhi proceeded to set out the following detailed proposals ("Young India", 11th September, 1924) :—

(1) The Congress should suspend all boycotts except that of foreign cloth till the session of 1925.

(2) The Congress should, subject to (1), remove the boycott of Empire goods.

(3) The Congress should confine its activity solely to the propaganda of hand-spinning and hand-spun khaddar, the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity and in addition its Hindu members' activity to the removal of untouchability.

(4) The four-anna franchise should be abolished and in its place the qualification for membership should be spinning by every member for half an hour per day and delivery to the Congress from month to month of at least 2000 yards of self-spun yarn ....."

Such a special elaboration of what came to be called the spinning franchise left us in no doubt of Mr. Gandhi's real purpose. While fulsome lip-service was all that was required with regard to the other two items, universal spinning was meant to be the chief plank of the new platform. As the new-fangled franchise became a veritable target of angry criticisms he hastened to defend it in the following vein. ("Young India", 16 Oct. 1924):—

"Spinning as a voluntary sacrifice is alright. but as a qualification for franchise it is galling'. This is the objection that I hear against my proposal ...But why ? If a monetary qualification, that is, restriction, may be imposed, why not a working qualification? ...... Is it galling in a temperance association to require every member to be a teetotaller?... . Is it galling, say in France, where military skill is considered a necessity of national existence, to require every member to practise the use of arms?......Why should it be galling in an Indian National Assembly to have spinning and the wearing of khaddar, which is a national necessity, to be the qualification for the franchise?"

But the analogies did not apply. The Congress was not and is not a mere national association, free to undertake any and every good or even beneficent activity. It was neither a religious nor a cultural, neither a humanitarian nor an economic organisation. The Congress was designed for the specific object of establishing self-government in India, that is, of effecting the transfer of political power from a microscopic minority of foreigners to the representatives of the people. And whatever miracles the spinning wheel might or might not work in other realms, there was not the ghost of a chance of its ousting thc Britishers from the seat of power. Nor would any sane men outside the irrational ring of Gandhi-worshippers agree with the Mahatma that the "boycott of foreign cloth will automatically purify the British mind and remove the one

insuperable obstacle in the way of Englishmen looking at things Indian from the Indian point of view." As usual he mistook the branch for the tree and in his ignorance of modern economics identified the Britishers' limited gains from Lancashire trade with the hydra-headed monster of capitalist Imperialism which devised and continued to devise innumerable methods of exploiting the dirt-cheap human labour of India's millions and the voluminous raw products of India's soil.

To resume, then, our narrative. The Swarajists were quite prepared to swallow without much demur even the more extensive spinning franchise in deference to the tender susceptibilities of the Mahatma. For they knew full well that they must pay this price for exploiting the name of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress for their orthodox campaign in the Councils. But how could they possibly agree to his proposal to confine the activity of the Congress "solely to the propaganda of hand-spun khaddar, the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability"? They desired to drive a square bargain with the great leader. They would be fully prepared to give Mr. Gandhi a perfectly free hand in the matter of hand-spinning if they, on their side, could carve out an honourable niche for their council programme in the Congress Pantheon.

Once again a political accident helped the Congress to patch up its internal differences. On October 25, 1924, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, issued an Ordinance; reminiscent of the Rowlatt Act, "authorising arrest and detention without warrant or trial of persons on mere suspicion and it was quickly acted upon by the arrest of a large number of persons in Bengal including Mr. Sobbash Chandra Bose who was then the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation". On visiting Calcutta during that period, Mr. Gandhi was thoroughly convinced that "whilst it was possible that among the arrested there may be some with anarchical tendencies, it was nevertheless a fact that the vast majority of them were Swarajists, and that if it was a fact, as the Government contended, that the anarchists were a large party, it was curious that the Government could find in the main only Swarajists to lay their hands upon." Under the specious pretext of crushing revolutionary terrorism, Government had sought to launch a most ferocious attack on the Swaraj-party—the strongest political party in Bengal—which had

already captured the municipal administration of Calcutta and destroyed the ministerial regime in the province. All his sense of chivalry being profoundly touched, Mr. Gandhi, on behalf of the No-change party, negotiated a new political agreement with the Swarajits leaders, Mr. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, on 6th November 1924.

The joint statement issued over the signatures of these three leaders was composed of two parts: the prefatory remarks setting out the common political objective of the two parties and the operative part suggesting a resolution "for adoption by all parties, and eventually by the Congress at Belgaum". In the first part, the leaders, after referring to the chief object of the Congress and the urgent need of reuniting both the parties, laid the greatest emphasis on the new regime of repression which was aimed "in reality not at any party of violence but at the Swaraj party in Bengal" and on the supreme necessity of securing the "co-operation of all parties for putting forth the united strength of the nation against the policy of repression". The operative part furnished a real novelty. After recommending the suspension of the N. C. O. programme, the adoption of the spinning franchise and the three-fold constructive work, the leaders stated that "the work in connection with the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be carried on by the Swaraj party on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress organisation and for such work the Swaraj party should make its own rules and raise and administer its own funds."

Commenting on the agreement, Mr. Gandhi wrote ("Young India", 13th Nov. 1924):—"The agreement puts Swarajists on a par with the No-changers... It is recognised that neither party can do without the other." And after giving other reasons for this *volte face* he advanced his chief plea: "Lastly the Bengal Ordinance demanded that the No-changers gave the Swaraj party the strongest support it was in their power to give."

After laying down the limits of his surrender, Mr. Gandhi hastened to stress his big gains: "Then there is the spinning franchise. I wanted much more khaddar on all occasions and spinning 2000 yards per month by all Congressmen, except in cases of illness or like disability. This has been watered down

to wearing khaddar on political occasions and spinning by deputy even for unwillingness .... In the first place the Maharashtra party had constitutional difficulty in agreeing to spinning or wearing khaddar as part of the franchise at all... It was, therefore, from their standpoint, a tremendous concession to their agreeing to make khaddar and hand spinning part of the franchise even in a modified form."

The basis of this ignoble bargain was obvious. Both the parties now agreed to formally abandon the seemingly revolutionary programme of mass passive resistance. Both parties were now anxious to line up with the counter-revolutionary front : Mr. Gandhi, "to feed the hungry and clothe the naked" by intensifying the production of khaddar, and the Swarajists, to assume the role of constitutional obstruction under the smoke-screen of militant slogans. Both, be it remembered, sought to carry out their humanitarian or constitutional activities within the steel frame of British Imperialism. And neither could make any show of even plausible success without the financial or political support of the landlords, industrialists nnd the big bourgeoisie. Both, therefore, deemed it necessary to throw the sacred cloak of milk-white khaddar on the reactionary tendencies of their activities in order to conceal them from the trustful eyes of their vast following, the patriotic students and youths, peasants and workers and petty bourgeoisie generally.

While Mr. Gandhi summoned up all his "strength to surrender to the Swarajists all that it was possible for me to surrender," he turned a cold shoulder to the more revolutionary appeal of some Bengal patriots. They rightly stressed that "independence and complete independence is our destined goal" and appealed to the Congress delegates "to define Swaraj as a Federal Republic of the United States of India." They further asked the Congress "to delete the words "peaceful and legitimate" from the Congress creed so that men holding any shade of opinion may have no difficulty in joining the only national organisation in the country." They further appealed to the Congress to adopt the programme of the boycott of British goods and of "helping the labourers and peasants of our land in obtaining their grievances redressed and organising them for their own economic good and moral prosperity".

After admitting that the appeal represented the view not merely of the signatories but also of a large number of educated Indians, Mr. Gandhi roundly denounced the historic principle of complete independence. "What, however, the independence of the signatories means is severance at any cost and in every case with England. I hold that such severence is not indispensable for India's growth and freedom. The burden of severence should lie with the English people." As if the issue of severence or slavery could ever be decided by any battle of words between the oppressors and the oppressed! Shivering at the grim prospect of "isolated" or "armed independence" the Mahatma plumped wholeheartedly for the sweet joys of "voluntary independence." Forgetting again the pacts of voluntary interdependence—such as are enterred into by the Governments of the world—could only be secured by an Independent India. And the arch-enemy of "the Satanic system of Government" now fell so low as to define Swaraj as "that status of India which her people desire at a given moment".

Ae regards the deletion of the clause "by peaceful and legitimate means," Mr. Gandhi would himself propose it, much against his desire, as "those who do not believe in the necessity of non-violence and truth have also joined the Congress". He dismissed the boycott of British goods as "a totally impracticable proposition." He applauded "the proposal to help the labourers and peasants" as "a counsel of perfection" which, however, the Mahatma found too inconvenient and dangerous to carry out in practice. And finally he concluded with his usual swan-song by exhorting the pariots to "apply themselves to the working of khaddar—a programme that can harness the energy of all who will work".

In spite of the complacent advocacy of Mr. Gandhi, history has pronounced its verdict in favour of the Bengal patriots. For the shattering blows delivered by Government has compelled the Congress to declare for complete independence in 1927—and again even more explicitly in 1929—though Mr. Gandhi has always exercised his greatest ingenuity in circumventing the plain meaning of words.

So thoroughly was Mr. Gandhi benumbed with political paralysis and hyponotised with the hum of the spinning wheel that

even the new Czarist Ordinance succeeded in only rousing him for a while to patch up a new peace with the Swaraj party.

The rest of Mr. Gandhi's story for the year (1924) is easily told.

Mr. Gandhi was nominated as one of the candidates for the presidentship of the annual session of the Congress which was to be held in Belgaum in December 1924. He, however, did not hasten to accept the proffered nomination. For many months he continued to express doubts and difficulties on the matter. No sooner the pact with the Swarajists was signed at Calcutta than he quickly announced his acceptance of the choice of the nation.

The decisions of the Belgaum Congress were a foregone conclusion. The Congress readily adopted a Resolution practically confirming the Calcutta pact and formally suspending the programme of non-co-operation and the five-fold boycott. The Swaraj party which its council programme was recognised as the predominant political party in the Congress while Mr. Gandhi was authorised to inaugurate the All India Spinners' Association to organize his pet cottage industry throughout the country.

We need not pause to examine at any length Mr. Gandhi's Presidential Address delivered at Belgaum. For he availed himself of his high position to take a retrospective survey of the non-co-operation movement from its very inception and to paraphrase, in even more jejune and unconvincing language, his familiar arguments for the adoption of his new lifeless programme of achieving Hindu-Muslim unity, producing khaddar and removing untouchability. Above all, he pleaded for the unanimous ratification of his pact with the Swarajists and of the spinning franchise so dear to his heart.

Of real politics as the world understands it, there was next to nothing in this presidential utterance. The Bengal Ordinance was dismissed with a few philosophical remarks at the tail end of the speech. Mr. Gandhi's discussion on the Swaraj scheme supplied the only real novelty of any political value.

"The end we do not know", began Mr. Gandhi, "For me it is enough to know the means. Means and end are convertible

terms in my philosophy of life. But I have long professed my conversion to the view pressed upon the public by Babu Bhagawan Das that the public must know the end not vaguely but precisely... Happily the Committee appointed by the All-Parties' Conference is charged with that mission and let us hope that the Committee will be able to produce a scheme that will be acceptable to all parties. (This Committee was appointed at a Conference convened by Mrs. Annie Besant under the auspices of her moderate organization, the National Home Rule League, in February 1924). May I suggest for its consideration the following points?

"1. The qualification for the franchise should be neither property or position but manual work such, for example, as spinning as suggested for the Congress franchise......

"2. The ruinous military expenditure should be curtailed......

"3. Administration of justice should be cheapened and with that end in view the final Court of Appeal should not be in London but in Delhi......

"4. Revenues from intoxicating liquors and drugs should be abolished......

"5. Salaries of the Civil and Military service should be brought down to a level compatible with the general condition of the country......

"6. There should be re-distribution of Provinces on a linguistic basis with as complete autonomy as possible for every Province for its internal administration and growth.

"7. Appointment of a commission to examine all the monopolies given to foreigners and subject to the finding of the commission, *full guarantees to be given for all vested rights justly acquired.*

"8. *Full guarantee of their status to be given to the Indian Chiefs without any hinderance from the Central Government subject to the right of asylum to subjects of these States......* in self-Governing India.

"9. Repeal of all arbitrary powers.

"10. The highest post to be open to all who may be otherwise fit. Examination for the Civil and Military Services to be in India.

"11. Recognition of complete religious freedom to various denominations subject to mutual forbearance.

"12. The official language for Provincial Governments, Legislatures and Courts with a definite period to be the vernacular of the Province; of the Privy Council, the final Court of Appeal, to be Hindustani............".

The sting of this disquisition lay in its tail. He could not but help using his high position on the presidential dais to cast a fling at the advocates of complete Independence. "In my opinion", said Mr. Gandhi complacently. "If the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection." So the erstwhile rebel of 1921 came to believe even hypothetically in the promises of the Britishers. What is worse, the Mahatma forgot that the only equality that could exist between an Imperialist England and the suppressed India could be similar to that of the lion and the lamb. Only the lamb would be within the lion and not outside.

In view of this devastating deviation of Mr. Gandhi's outlook, it would serve no useful purpose to examine with any minuteness the twelve jewels set out above, though nobody will miss the guarantees to all vested rights and to the Indian Princes! For what did the details of the constitutional structure matter if India was to be governed—in truth, if not in form—by the agents for a foreign Government and was to be occupied by a foreign army? British diplomacy has even formally announced the independence of Egypt. And yet the land of the Pharaohs lies thoroughly paralysed in the deadly embrace of British Imperialism.

Mr. Gandhi's presidential address represented for good many years his last political will and testament. For unlike most Congress leaders he had enjoyed unprecedented dictatorial powers long before his election to the chair. Since his release from jail he had made up his mind to devote his mind and energies solely to the promotion of social programme of "constructive work." Humbled

and humiliated at the Ahmedabad meeting of the A.I.C.C. he had virtually decided to retire from political life. But so consumate a politician like Mr. Gandhi would not run away from the fascinating scene in huff or hurry. The Calcutta pact, however, left his path open for him. He compelled the Swarajists' submission to the obnoxious spinning franchise as the price of their elevation to political power in the Congress. And it would not be too presumptuous to say that Swarajists in their turn deliberately lifted him to the exalted eminence of the Presidential *Gadi* to enable him to proclaim with due pomp and ceremony his retirement from practical politics for many a year to come.

LXV

THE COMMUNAL IMPASSE

I HAVE refered in passing to the recrudescence of communal disturbances soon after the incarceration of Mr. Gandhi. I should now examine a little more closely his re-actions to the new developments culminating in the grim tragedy at Kohat which compelled him to observe an extraordinary fast of 21 days in September 1924.

After carefully studying the march of events for a few months, Mr. Gandhi fully unburdened himself in an elaborate article towards the end of May 1924. As he himself frankly admitted, "the Mussalman as a rule is a bully and the Hindu is a coward". He thus implicitly accused the Mohammedans of aggressiveness and iritiative in the communal troubles. No wonder then that the Hindu leaders held Mr. Gandhi's Khilafat movement as the root-cause of the whole trouble. To that he replied as follows:—

"......I am totally unrepentant. Had I been a prophet and foreseen all that has happened I should have still thrown myself in the Khilafat agitation. Inspite of the present strained relation between the two communities both have gained. The awakening among the masses was a necessary part of the training. It is itself a tremendous gain. I would do nothing to put the people to sleep again. Our wisdom consists in directing the awakening in the proper channel".

Were then the awakened masses guilty of these orgies of violence? Were the millions of Hindu and Mohammedan farmers—who had been peacefully tilling their lands side by side—or the labourers and shopkeepers of the towns—who had been peacefully pursuing their common vocations as friendly neighbours—suddenly possessed by the demon of religious animosity to engage in a fratricidal war on their own initiative? Were even the much abused goondas to be held responsible for the religious riots which were generally confined to the towns? Mr. Gandhi replied emphatically in the negative and laid all the blame on the educated leaders of both the communities.

"It is a mistake to blame the goondas. They never do mischief unless we create an atmosphere for them. I was an eye-witness to what happened in Bombay on the Prince's day in 1921. We sowed the seed and the goondas reaped the harvest. Our men were at their back. I have no hesitaticn in holding the respectable Mussalmans (not all in any single case) responsible for the misdeeds in Multan, Saharanpur and elsewhere, as I have none in holding respectable Hindus responsible for the misdeeds in Katarpur and Arrah".

So Mr. Gandhi accused not merely respectable men but "our men" of both denominations of incitement to communal violence. And as he had himself blamed the Mohammedans of aggressive tactics, he must be deemed to have reposed the final responsibility on the influential and leading.Mohammedan workers who had come under the spell of his own Khilafat agitation. If he had no difficulty in shifting the moral responsibility from the actual perpetrators of the crimes to the prime movers behind the scenes they could in their turn rightly shift it to their leader himself.

It was not the general awakening but the motive of the awakening that furnished a fertile ground for the trouble. India had engaged in a just and righteous struggle for its freedom from foreign rule. But it had been based from its inception on a false and a mischievous basis. For, as the reader will remember, it was primarilly "to right the Khilafat wrong" that Mr. Gandhi had firts unfolded his plan of mass non-co-operation. Then he would not allow even a clear political issue like the Punjab atrocities to be associated with the holy campaign. While the most fundamental question of Swaraj was only graciously allowed by Mr. Gandhi to be smuggled into his draft Resolution at the Calcutta Congress. Inspite of the tackling of these most sovereign issues he persisted in rivetting the thoughts and feelings, passions and prejudices of the people on the "Khilafat wrong". Muslim theological discourses and religious exhortations rent the air. Pious priests and mediæval Maulanas availed themselves of the new political platform to inflame old-world superstitions and fanaticism to the highest pitch. The whole tempo of the mighty agitation was thus calculated to emphasise the separatist tendencies and blind prejudices in the minds of the excited multitudes. These appeared to serve an

useful purpose so long as their fury was directed against Government. No sooner, however, a halt was called than the same fury was turned against their next door neighbours and the battle of freedom was converted into a civil war. It was Mr. Gandhi who sowed the seed in 1921 which grew into such a poisonous tree in 1922 and thereafter.

Nor did he hesitate to inflame the separatist prejudices of the Hindus. He showed even the sacred cow into the movement. "The masses have come in," he wrote, after the Bardoli debacle, "because they want to save the Khilafat and the Cow. Deprive the Mussalman of the hope of helping the Khilafat and he will shun the Congress. Tell the Hindu he cannot save the Cow if he joins the Congress, he will to a man leave it." The Muslim mentality was unfortunately wedded to the Khilafat. But the diagnosis of the Hindu mind was preposterous. Nobody in his senses could believe that the millions who followed the standard of the Congress had any conscious motive of protecting the cow from the Mohammedan's knife. Yet the issue of cow slaughter was often brought in as an item of diplomatic bargaining with Muslim. Hindu fanaticism was sedulously fed on the hope of ending all cow slaughter in India as a reward of their fraternal solidarity in what was falsely made out as the Khilafat struggle. These hopes were not fulfilled. And if the Hindus' feelings were lacerated and served to foment communal trouble the prime responsibility must again be traced to the religious mania of Mr. Gandhi.

By the time he came upon the scene the good fight was buried in oblivion. The evil seeds sown by him had fructified and were ceaselessly giving a poisonous harvest. Yet subject, as ever, to a supreme frenzy of self-delusion, he refused to recognise his own handiwork. He remained blind even to the recent history of the very Khilafat he had boosted so much. For not only had religious motives been ostracised there in favour of the supreme object of political and temporal freedom, but the Mustafa Kamal Pasha had gone to the length of summarily dismissing the antediluvian Khilafat from his holy seat of Constantinople, even while the misguided Mohammedans of India were tearing their hair and gnashing their teeth to save him from extinction. The whole of the epic drama was staged before Mr. Gandhi's eyes. The lesson was easy to read and digest. The

supremacy of the temporal power over the spiritual shibboleths, of a modern republic over a mythical religious Empire, of militant patriotism over crumbling superstition, was proved to the hilt in the very seat of the Khilafat itself. Yet Mr. Gandhi learnt nothing and unlearnt nothing. He remained unrepentant and irreclaimable.

There was only one way out of the communal impasse. It had been brought about by mad insistence and emphasis on religious passions and superstitions. These have a disastrous and fissiparous tendency. They divide man from man. And whatever the benefits and advantages of religious theories and practices on the spiritual plane, all material and political causes must be fought out on material and political issues. These, on the other hand, have an essentially unifying and cementing tendency. India's fight for political freedom must be broadbased on the firm rock of the common lot of its millions of all denominations—hunger and exploitation economic and political sefdom. All other issues such as cow-slaughter and music before mosques must be brushed aside as irrelevant and immaterial.

It was easy indeed to demonstrate the real solidarity of the millions of toilers of all denominations in the country. Were the Hindu and Mohammedan tenants being bled white impartially by Hindu and Muslim landlords? Were not the peasants of both the communities being driven to a state of perpetual bankruptcy by the inhuman exactions of Government and of the usurious money-lenders? Were not the city and town workers of both creeds subjected to inhuman conditions of life and work by the oppressive combinations of millowners irrespective of all differences of castes and creeds? Do not the so-called political differences between the two communities regarding seats in Council and Government offices affect the lives of only an infinitesimal percentage of the millions of their total population? After all, the central fact emerged that the masses of all denominations were imprisoned in the vast jail of India and were being most brutally oppressed and exploited by the foreign Government with the active co-operation on the solid phalanx of the Hindu and Muslim Princes and landlords, big merchants and money-lenders. Thus could a discerning national leader tear the confounding masks of divergent creeds and

religions from off the face of suffering and starving humanity and enthrone in their own confused minds a sense of their real and lasting unity far above the petty and childish quarrels about worship and sacrifice.

But Mr. Gandhi did not even attempt any analysis of this kind. The political bankruptcy of a leader who did not even by a single phrase or a line emphasise or suggest the basic economic and political unity of the two communities surpasses comprehension. However unconsciously but none the less surely he took the Imperialistic bait and stressed the seriousness and magnified the complexities of the questions which were neither truly religious nor moral and which were being deliberately exploited by unscrupulous gangs of Maulvis and Pandits. His solutions of the new difficulties were as primitive as his diagnosis. His advice could be summarised in one word. He humbly and prayerfully pleaded for a change of heart in both the communities regarding their rights of worship and sacrifice; forgetting that the bogs and cesspools of ceremonial controversies had emerged in view only on account of the subsidence of the political bedrock.

The Mahatma's advice fell on deaf ears. The autumn of 1924 brought a rich harvest of communal riots and bloodshed. The worst of these happened at Kohat where Mohammedan fanatics slaughtered many Hindus and burnt their houses in circumstances of the most harrowing brutality. These incidents proved the last straw on the camel's back. On 18th September Mr. Gandhi announced a fast for 21 days, in the following words: "The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My hopelessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that wherever there is distress which one cannot remove one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my dearest ones. Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together......I respectfully invite the heads of all the communities including Englishmen to meet and end this quarrel which is a disgrace to religion and to humanity. It seems as if God has been dethroned. Let us re-instate him in our hearts".

The fast naturally created a great sensation throughout the country. A Unity Conference was hurriedly convened at Delhi. It was attended not only by the Hindu and Muslim delegates but

also by the Christian Metropolitan of India and by the representatives of other communities. After deliberating for several days the Conference passed several Resolutions laying down the principles of settlement and detailed instructions regarding the composition of differences arising out of such religious observances such as conversions, and re-conversions, playing music before mosques, Muharram processions, cow-slaughter, etc. The gist of all the detailed Resolutions was set out in the first Resolution as follows:—

"This Conference places on record its deep grief and concern at the fast which Mahatma Gandhi has undertaken. This Conference is emphatically of opinion that the utmost freedom of conscience and religion is essential and condemns any desecration of places of worship to whatsoever faith they may belong and any persecutions or punishment of any person for adopting or reverting to any faith and further condemns any attempt by compulsion to convert people to one's faith or to enforce one's own religious observances at the cost of the rights of others".

The Conference further appointed a Central National Panchayat of six leaders with Mr. Gandhi as the President with powers to add to their numbers up to 15, "to enquire into and to settle all disputes and differences including recent occurrences, where necessary and desirable ".

This Panchayat, however, only remained on paper. The fast, the Conference and its Resolutions were quickly forgotten and both the communities resumed their usual quarrels against each other. And though serious riots broke out in many towns and cities thereafter the calculating ascetic fasted no more.

LXVI

ALLIANCE WITH PRINCES

FROM Belgaum Mr. Gandhi proceeded almost directly to his own native land to preside over the annual sessions of the Kathiawad Political Conference. As he remarked in the opening sentence of his address, the presidentship of the Conference had been offered to him during the height of the Non-co-operation Movement in 1921. The motives of the promoters of the Conference could, therefore, be easily imagined. As the people of British India suffered under the oppression of British rule, so were the poor peasants of Mr. Gandhi's native Province literally ground down under the excessive taxation and barbarous autocracy of the Feudal Chiefs. The leaders of the Conference had every hope that the arch enemy of British Imperialism would give them a new message and a new hope of political emancipation and would suggest a novel technique of overthrowing the galling yoke of the robber barons of Kathiawad.

Mr. Gandhi, however, presided over the Conference about three years too late. The militant saint of 1921-22 had now crystallised into the peaceful apostle of the spinning wheel. No wonder then that the political hopes of the militant Kathiawaris were doomed to dismal disappointment.

When was Mr. Gandhi's object in presiding over the Conference ? He had often stated that the Native State subjects were the slaves of the slaves. Did he then believe in James Connoly's dictum that the measure of the emancipation of the most suppressed classes of a country would be the measure of the national liberation of a subject people ? Did the great Messiah hasten to his kith and kin to lead them in a great campaign of *Satyagraha* against the Czarist rule and the inhuman exploitation by their blood-sucking tyrants ? And even if he found them unwilling or incapable of following him on such a war-path, did he at any rate attempt to rouse them from their slumber of ages and to expose in their ghastly nakedness the innumerable vices of the Feudal

Governments which combined the rapacity of mediæval robbers with the all-consuming greed of the modern capitalists ?

Not at all. He set out to give a lead to the Conference of the exploited classes by openly fraternising with the exploiters and their agents and parasites. Of course, his offer of alliance was conditional on their acceptance of the spinning wheel and khadi as the panacea of all ills. In effect he advised the robbed to tolerate and connive at the perpetual crimes of their robbers if only the latter put on the saintly livery of khadi and spun for a few minutes a day—of course to set an estimable example to these subjects to recompense themselves a little by drudging away at the sacred wheel.

Mr. Gandhi began by defending the Congress policy of "Non-interference with regard to questions affecting Indian States-" Thus he began—as he ended—by concealing the most palpable contradiction between the interests of the oppressors and the oppressed by lumping them under spacious name of States and by virtually treating the exploited masses as the personal chattels and belongings of their feudal masters.

And this is how Mr. Gandhi visualised the future. "I have, therefore, often said that the liberation of British India spells the liberation of the States as well. When the auspicious day of the freedom of British India arrives the relations of the ruler and the ruled in the Indian States will not cease but will be purified. Swaraj as conceived by me does not mean the end of kingship. Nor does it mean the end of capital. Accumulated capital means ruling power. I am for establishment of the right relations between capital and labour, etc. I do not wish for the supremacy of the one over the other. I do not think there is any natural antagonism between them. The rich and the poor will always be with us. But their mutual relations will be subject to constant change".

So the distinguished president loyally pledged himself to the perpetuation of the proprietorship of the Heaven-born Rajahs even after the dawn of political freedom had broken in the rest of India. Many mightier thrones and older Empires had crumbled and crashed even during the past few decades. The Czars, the

Hapsburgs and the Kaisers had vanished before Mr. Gandhi's eyes. Yet he had no hesitation in signing away in perpetuity the lives and fortunes of the millions of his brothers and sisters to the tender mercies of the petty chieftains who had risen and burst like bubbles every few decades before the advent of the British regime in India.

But when Mr. Gandhi said that he did not wish for the supremacy of the one over the other—of Capital over Labour or rulers over the ruled or *vice versa*—he obviously played with words. Capital *is* supreme over Labour to-day as the Rajahs *ipso facto* hold unchallenged sway over their subjects. He who, therefore, votes for the perpetuation of the existing social order necessarily votes for the continuation of the existing tyranny and exploitation. All that the president had obviously in view was some soothing changes, some mild reforms as would serve to reconcile the oppressed to the yoke of their tyrants.

Then he proceeded—albeit in a very brotherly manner—to draw the Princes' attention to some of the minor defects in their lives and administrations. He lightly chaffed them on their expensive visits to Europe, their shallow imitation of the West, their limitless personal expenditure and their revenue and Abkari policy. But no sooner had he criticised the States, however gently, than he proceeded to offer an apology to the mightly masters. "I have not criticised the States for the sake of criticism. I know the Gandhi family has been connected with them for three generations. I have myself been a witness to ministership in three States. I remember that the relations of my father and uncle with their respective States were perfectly cordial. I believe that I am not devoid of the sense of discrimination. I am anxious to see only the good points of the States".

Obviously he was compelled to reprove the "noble Princes" even so mildly under the overwhelming pressure of the hotheads of the Conference. For the rest Mr. Gandhi administered a strong sermon on the cultivation of the Heavenly qualities of fearlessness, tolerance and suffering to the starving people of Kathiawar who were pining to embark on some campaign of direct action against their worst enemies. And lest all his pious homilies might leave the militants in a desperate and a disgruntled mood, he concluded

on the note of the spinning wheel. For not only would there be no possibility of any conflict between a prince and his subjects but in Khadi work, "on the other hand, their relations might be expected to become cordial". ("Young India" 15th Jan. 1925).

The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. The value of the Conference would be judged by its results. This is how Mr. Gandhi hastened to assess its value. "The most startling event of the session perhaps was the solemn Resolution taken by Sir Prabhashankar Pattani to spin daily for at least half an hour before taking his principal meal so long as he was not too ill to turn the wheel......He attended the Subjects Committee by invitation as a visitor. After the spinning Resolution was adopted I invited the members to enrol themselves as spinners......Up jumped to his feet Sir Prabhashankar and in solemn tones announced the foregoing Resolution amid cheers......Let me hope that the other administrators and ministers will copy Sir Prabhashankar's noble resolve to the benefit of themselves and the people under their charge".

It was scandalous indeed that such a high minister of a first class State in Kathiawar and such a reputed abettor and accomplice of all the States was allowed to attend the Subjects Committee which should serve as an open forum for ventilating the political grievances of the thrice-oppressed people under the seal of secrecy. The presence of an agent of the enemies could only, therefore, serve to muzzle up the mouths of the militant members. But Mr. Gandhi added insult to injury by holding up for their admiring applause a theatrical act of a parasite of the States.

The promoters of the Conference had evidently sought the invaluable help and inspiration of the great leader in organising their ranks under the militant leadership of their own class for launching an uncompromising war on their tyrants and oppressors. Mr. Gandhi, however, ended by advising the oppressed and the exploited to organise themselves under the hegemony of their worst enemies for fulfilling the sacred gospel of the spinning wheel. He was invited to serve. He went and betrayed them to the enemy.

LXVII

ALLIANCE WITH CAPITALISTS AND CONSTITUTIONALISTS

AS with the Princes, so with the capitalists, the big bourgeoisie and their Swarajist and other constitutionalist henchmen. Having broken with the programme of mass revolution long ago, Mr. Gandhi was now rushing with full steam ahead to complete the course of counter-revolution. He could not, however, afford to disappoint and lose his vast following among the idealistic youth, the exploited peasantry and the small shopkeepers and merchants. These elements he succeeded in keeping at his feet by waving before their hypnotised eyes the empty flag and livery of war after depriving both of all militant purpose and programme. Having thus blinded them effectively to the real purpose of his successive moves, he felt free to reach out his loving arms not only to the Swarajists, but to the whole crowd of liberals, constitutionalists, place-hunters and even open allies of Government.

During his hunt for his old and discarded allies, Mr. Gandhi very soon found himself up against a blind wall. The representatives of the political parties raised all kinds of difficulties when he met them at an All-Parties Conference during November 1924. For he had already signed his pact with the Swarajists and recognised them as the Congress party in the Councils. Only the National Home Rulers—led by Dr. Besant—"practically accepted the position set forth in the agreement between the Swaraj party and me and now ratified A. I. C. C." For Dr. Besant's party never contested any elections. But the Liberals and the Independents raised difficulties about the "creed, the transfer of all Council work to the Swarajists and the franchise." If only these parties had accepted the spinning franchise, Mr. Gandhi would have exercised all his igenuity in evolving a common formula to suit all the Council parties. As it was, the Conference only ended by appointing a committee to consider the ways and means of bringing about unity and to report to the Conference before the 31st March, 1925.

Was then Mr. Gandhi enamoured of the much-advertised Swarajist tactics of obstructing and destroying the Councils? Did he believe for a single moment that the Swarajists had far surpassed the other parties by carrying the campaign of non-co-operation inside the Councils? Did he even care to criticise, however mildly, the Liberals and the Independents for co-operating with the Satanic Government? These questions must be unhesitatingly replied in the negative. In his article on the ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE ("Young India" 27th November 1924) he preserved diplomatic silence on these relevant issues. He defended the Calcutta pact merely on the formal plea that "if the Congress suspends non-co-operation the Swarajists *perhaps ipso facto* become predominant." Then he held out to the other parties that if they "desired more it can be obtained only by joining the Congress and appealing to the reasons of the Swarajists or by educating the Congress electorate and also by *forming new electorates*." It was no fault of Mr. Gandhi that the other parties did not walk into the Congress parlour.

Thus Mr. Gandhi found himself in a very pathetic position. Ideologically he now felt at one again with the Moderates—the unabashed parasites and champions of the big capitalists and landlords, the Princes and the Britishers. But the Swarajists barred the way to his open and formal alliance with them. For though Mr. Gandhi did not think much of their flamboyant tactics in the councils, the Swarajists sought to preserve their complete monopoly of the vast electorate swayed by the Congress leaders. And the Liberals and the Independents would not possibly enter the Congress unless they could poach on the Swarajist preserve. As no way could be found out of the impasse for the moment, Mr. Gandhi encouraged the Swarajists by open suggestions and more significant silence to ally themselves even more assiduously than before with the capitalists and constitutionalists and effectively exploited them for negotiating and co-opertaing with both and eventually with Government itself.

It would not be, therefore, quite irrelevant to examine a little more minutely the rapid degeneration in the Swarajist tactics from the very beginning of 1924.

The founder of the Swaraj party, Mr. C. R. Das, in outlining his new programme at the Gaya Congress, definitely pledged himself to the emancipation of the down-trodden 98 percent. of the population and denounced the desire to replace the White bureaucracy by a Brown bureaucracy. He also spoke of the organisation of the workers, peasants and tenants as an integral part of his programme. He also promised that the Swarajists, if elected to the Councils, would "give battle to the enemy from closer quarters," by following a policy of consistent and continuous obstruction and wreckage.

Let us see how these specious pledges were carried out. In the very programme of the new party and election manifesto issued in 1923, Swaraj was interpreted as "an effective control of the existing machinery and system of Government and the right to frame a constitution". It is significant that Dass and Company, who were so prominent in denouncing the reforms as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and unacceptable," were already prepared to accept the "machinery and system of Government" set up by the same hated reforms on condition that they could have "an effective control" on them. Another point in the programme of the party that had ostensibly set out to champion the cause of the 98 percent. of the propertyless masses was to "protect private and individual property and to foster the growth of individual wealth." Finally, they would be organisers of the oppressed tenantry proceeded to bottle up its revolutionary energy by boldly delivering it bound hand and foot—a la Gandhi—in the loving arms of its worst enemies. After referring to "many a brilliant chapter" furnished by the members of the "ancient order of landlords" in the history of the country, the manifesto stated : "The party can appeal to these latter (the landlords) to set at rest the doubts and misgivings of their less enlightened brethren by explaining to them the obvious fact that those who desire to help in the building up of Swaraj cannot possibly dream of such madness as to undermine the very foundations of society as it had existed for hundred of years in India by trying to eliminate an important class from it. True it is that the Party stands for justice to the tenant, but poor indeed will be the quality of that justice if it involves any injustice to the landlord".

Further, Mr. Das stated in reply to the Secretary of the Behar Panchayat Association; "I do not desire any friction between landlords and tenants......Whatever steps are taken must be taken after the attainment of Swaraj and even then only as a matter of agreement between the landlords and the tenants".

The reason for such a right-about-turn were obvious. The revolutionary trappings so pompously displayed at Gaya and thereafter had done their work. The rational politicians and the rising youth disillusioned with the Gandhi's movement had been successfully baited. Even the intractable Congress had been won over. Having thus established to their own satisfaction their claims to represent the 98 per cent. of the people, the Swarajists adopted a more dignified plumage to attract the votes of the 2 per cent. voters with a stake in the country.

On entering the Legislative Assembly the Swarajists swung further to the right. For they stipulated in forming a coalition with the Independents—the more avowed advocates of the capitalists and the big bourgeoisie—that they would not launch any policy of obstruction unless it was agreed to by three-fourth of the combined membership of the Nationalist Party (a Parliamentary condition of the Swarajists and the Independents). And Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Swarajists, speaking in support of his amendment (summarising the National Demand) dramatically declared. "I am not asking for responsible Government to be handed over, as it were, tied up in a bundle. *We have come here to offer our co-operation*. If the Government will receive this co-operation they will find that we are their men." Obviously, the party that had come "to make war in the enemy's camp" attempted from the very outset to draw the Government into negotiations which might lead to a "gentleman's agreement".

In moving the rejection of the first four heads of the revenue side of the budget the Swarajist leader said: "May present motion has nothing to do with the wrecking or destroying policy of the non-co-operators, and is in effect a perfectly *constitutional and legitimate means* of drawing attention to the grievances of the country." No wonder, then, the official review of the year 1923-24 paid the following compliments to the Swarajists: "In their treatment of the budget as well as in their conduct during other episodes the Swarajists must be considered to have played the part of an accredited

constitutional opposition......So far from indulging in the wholesale programme of obstruction and wreckage, upon which they had at one time laid stress, they took a prominent part in the ordinary business of the House".

This was in March 1924. By May, however, the slippery Swarajists passed on from constitutional opposition to active co-operation. An extraordinary session of the Assembly was convened in that month to consider the Steel Industry (Protection) Bill with a view to give protection to the Tata Steel Company. The Swarajists, who had promised to obstruct all Government measures, promptly voted for the Bill. Further, no less than five Swarajist members, including Pandit Nehru and Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, accepted seats on the Select Committee to consider the Bill and thus willingly co-operated with the Government. Mr. Patel moved an amendment recommending the application of protection only to those industries having at least two-thirds Indian capital. The amendment was incorporated in the Bill. Having thus served the cause of Indian capitalists the erstwhile champions of the down-trodden masses had no hesitation in summarily rejecting an amendment moved by Mr. M. N. Joshi stipulating for a minimum wage to the labourers in the Tata Company in return for the advantage accruing from protection.

In August 1924 Mr. Das made an important statement to the Press. After reiterating the demand for Provincial automony he stated : "But there should be some control in the Legislative Assembly, the extent of which could only be discussed at a Round Table Conference". Thus the effective control, demanded in the election manifesto, was now reduced to "some control" and the extent even of the "some control" remained open to negotiation.

Mr. Das concluded his statement with a grave warning to Government : "I have been a truer friend of constitutional progress and more against the growing tendency towards anarchy than the Government will believe . .. There is a more serious anarchist movement than the authorities realised..... I hope Britain and India will come together presently and come to terms on the lines I have mentioned".

Thus Mr. Das openly suggested the alliance of British Imperialism with Indian bourgeoise to stem the tide of the revolutionary

movement which he misnamed anarchical. And the Bengal Government made the fullest use of this statement of Mr. Das for defending the repressive Ordinance which it issued within two months.

The year 1925 began in an atmosphere surcharged with speculations as regards the possibility of the Swarajists accepting office provided that a few modifications were made in the system of dyarchy. The question of the Swarajists' acceptance of Ministership arose only in two Provinces—Bengal and Central Provinces—where the Nationalists had a working majority. Towards the end of March a number of Muslim Swarajists issued a statement to the press giving it to be understood that Mr. C. R. Das was willing to form a ministry in Bengal. The Swarajist leader immediately issued a counter-statement in which he declared that he was "willing to co-operate with the Government provided that the conditions were honourable".

In the beginning of April 1925 the Tory Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead, made a speech on Indian conditions sounding the possibility of an agreement. In a statement issued from Patna on April 3rd in relation to Brikenhead's speech Mr. Das admitted that "a favourable atmosphere has been created for further discussion," but expressed his inability to go further ahead unless the Government met "us half way on the lines suggested by me". And what were these lines? "Provincial autonomy with some control in the Central Government which at present might consist of the British and a mixed British Viceroy and Indian Council".

So "effective control" in the Central Government demanded in the original Swarajist manifesto was watered down by imperceptible stages to "some control". But even that was given up as an imperative condition of co-operation by the Swarajist leader. For after prolonged secret negotiations with the Governor of Bengal Mr. Das was said, on the most reliable authority, to have agreed to form a nationalist Ministry if all Provincial departments except the Police were transferred to the Indian ministers and all political prisoners were released.

Mr. Gandhi has himself testified to the strange hypnotism exercised by Birkenhead's speech on the lion of Bengal. Giving the "sacred recollections of the last five days" in "Young India"

(10th July 1925) he wrote: "Of the proposed All Parties Conference he (Das) said:—"We must not have the conference just yet. I expect big things from Lord Birkenhead. He is a strong man and I like strong men. He is not so bad as he speaks. If we hold the meeting we must sap something on the situation. I do not want to embarrass him by pitching our demands higher than he may be prepared to grant at the present moment". Mr. Gandhi confessed to him that he did not share his faith. He further told him that "we have apparently never been so weak as now" and that "Englishmen have never conceded anything to weakness". Mr. Das replied from his death-bed: "Something within me tells me that we are in for something big". Alas! he was not fated to see the "something big" that did come to India very soon but very different from what he so fondly expected!

We need not pause here to criticise the last political acts and sentiments of Mr. Das before his sudden death on 16th June 1925. The moral is obvious. It was indeed the political genius and fiery eloquence of Deshabandhn that threw a revolutionary halo on the Swaraj party in the initial stages and secured a large following among the political intelligentsia and the emancipated youth. The workers in town and villages hailed the party as it pledged itself to their uplift and organisation. India hoped for a short while to see something of the Irish Parliamentary tactics in the new Councils and of the vigorous Land League agitation in the country. But the supposed explosives very soon proved empty squibs. The professed champions of inveterate obstruction and destruction very soon slipped into the easy paths of constitutional Parliamentary opposition. Even votes of censure were soon understood as open overtures for negotiations and compromise. The "National demand" was ignominously lowered for fear of embarrassing the authorities and pitching terms much too high for their convenience. The thorny path of organising peasants and workers was unceremoniously dropped in favour of profitable co-operation with landlords and capitalists. And if the great Deshabandhu sank so low as to express the senile sentiments—which might have been easily denounced at the infamous inventions of a slanderous tongue but for the unimpeachable testimony of Mr. Gandhi—we may well imagine the depths of demoralist on that had overpowered the Swaraj party within a year and a half of its existence.

The lower the Swaraj party sank the more Mr. Gandhi rallied enthusiastically to its support. In a letter addressed to Pandit Motilal Nehru, the new leader of the party, on July 19th, he hastened to communicate his new decision. " Under situation created by the speech (of Lord Birkenhead) the authority and influence of the Swaraj party need to be increased......This can be done if the Congress becomes a predominately political body...I propose to ask the forthcoming meeting of the A. I. C. C. to place the entire machinery of the Congress at your disposal ".

Heartened by such fulsome blessings of the Mahatma, Pandit Nehru now took new strides on the Royal road of co-operation: Nor did he permit himseif to be swayed to the left even by the sabre rattling speech of the Tory Secretary of States who smashed to smithereens all the high hopes cherished by his late leader. He signalised the new policy by accepting in July a nominated seat on the Skeen Committee to investigate the possibility of establishing in India a military academy on the lines of British Sandhurst. The next move was taken by Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, the stormy petrel of the Swaraj party. In August he permitted himself to be elected the first popular President of the Legislative Assembly. On accepting his high seat Mr. Patel made a speech which contained the following :—

" I became a candidate because I thought I could better serve India in this way. The Swarajists have been described as destructive critics : our duty is to show that we know also how to construct......From this moment I cease to be a party member...... If the Viceroy wants, I will attend him ten times a day, and my assistance will always be at the disposal of the Goverament officials ".

In September 1925 the " national demand " was again put forward in the Legislative Assembly meeting at Simla. The occasion was the debate on the Report of the Muddiman Committee—appointed after the first Resolution containing the "national demand" had been passed in 1924—to continue the working of the reformed constitution and recommend amendments, if necessary. The distinguishing feature of the Swarajist Resolution was that it did not demand any change in the constitution. It simply embodied a scheme of piecemeal reforms which should be considered

by a "Convention Round Table Conference *or any other suitable agency*" to be called into being by the Viceroy "in consultation with the Legislative Assembly." Thus the wreckers and destroyers of the constitution cleared the way for the appointment of the Royal Commission on Reforms.

Within a few weeks Mr. Tambe, the leader of the Swarajist party in the Central Provinces, accepted office in the Government Executive Council. The act was at once denounced by the Council of the Swaraj party and carried a sharp division in its ranks. But when the A. I. C. C. met in October 1925 it satisfied itself by adopting on elaborate Resolution to amend the spinning franchise and another one to enthrone the Swaraj party—at the moment of its greatest demoralisation and disruption—on a high pedestal within the Congress.

The Swarajist merry-go-round was widely noticed and commented on in and outside the Councils.

Speaking in support of the Swarajist motion in September Mr. Jinnah asked the Governor: "Do you want Pandit Motilal Nehru to go down on his knees before the Viceregal throne and then only you will appoint a Royal Commission? What has he been doing in the Assembly? Has he not been co-operating?" The astute Pandit did not care to contradict this suggestion.

An indiscreet Swarajist, Dewan Chamman Lall, proud of his radical tendencies, said during the same debate: "The Swaaaj party has really accepted the Liberal Federation programme to show that the country stood united in its demands".

A Liberal organ summarised the Swarajist attitude at a still earlier period thus: "Step by step, stage by stage, they (the Swarajists) have been coming down from the dizzy heights of obstruction to the plainer paths of negation of co-operation and finally to the acceptance of responsive co-operation as a principle of their programme." (*The Bengali*, July 22nd 1925).

Finally, let us see how our Imperialist masters perceived the truth of the situation: "Now that India is turning to the paths of patience it is all important that we should show her that substantial progress can be made through constitutionalism and co-operation." (*Manchester Guardian*).

The Swarajist leader put a coping stone on his policy by emphasing his whole-hearted solidarity with the industrialists and capitalists. It was on the occasion of the Tata Steel Protection Bill that he deflected for the first time from the original course of obstruction. In the beginning of 1925 ugly rumours were rampant that the Swarajist war chest had been heavily subsidised by the Millowners who have received in their turn full assurances of Swarajist support for the abolition of the cotton excise duty. In September 1925 about 150,000 workers employed in the Bombay mills were locked out to enforce a further wage cut of 11·5 per cent (in addition to a 20 per cent cut in 1924) on the pretext of ruining trade-depression though not less than half the mills were paying a fairly high rate of dividend. The labour trouble was successfully used as a lever for abolishing the unconscionable excise duty. At a tea-party given in honour of Pandit Nehru by the cotton mill-owners in Bombay the president of their association thanked the Swarajist leader for the great services rendered by his party to the premier industry in the Assembly. Pandit Nehru replied: ' I assure the millowners that we will act similarly whenever the industry will be in danger of being exploited by foreign or unfair competition." Not a word, however, about the miserable condition of the labourers who sweated for these masters to give a profit of more than one hundred per cent on the original capital during the three years from 1919-1921.

Mr. Gandhi would not grumble at these Swarajist tactics. Though an ascetic himself he is instinctively conscious of the virtues of property. He implicity respects capital whether vested in a Prince or a mill-owner, a landlord or a merchant. He could champion the cause of the down-trodden and the exploited only by sailing under the false flag of Mondism—by identifying their interests with those of their worst enemies. And while the leader of the No-changers might have chuckled sometimes at the inevitable breakdown of the Swarajist policy, there is every reason to believe that he trusted them better when they were in full retreat from their original positions at the end of 1925. Moreover, Deshabandhu Das had something of the stuff of which great heroes and martyrs are made. But Pandit Nehru was more elastic, manageable and accommodating.

But Pandit Nehru and his master were faced with a serious difficulty on the eve of the annual session to be held at Cawnpur. The Swarajist backslidings had become quite notorious. Enemies laughed at the high pretensions that had evaporated in thin air within a few months. The No-changers—who had already outstripped their leader in their dogmatic belief in the innate virtues of unalloyed non-co-operation—were howling at the unabashed co-operation offered by the Swarajists in the sacred name of the Congress, The rank and file of the Swaraj party was getting restive ond critical, if not openly hostile, at the opportunist moves of the leaders. What was worse the mass of the people had been thoroughly disillusioned and scandalised at the betrayal of the solemn trust reposed in the Swarajists. They had gone to the Councils to tear the mask off the face of the bureaucracy. They had ended by tearing the mask off from their own faces and revealing the professed obstructionists and wreckers as sleek co-operators and slippery opportunists—already on the way to soft jobs and diplomatic commissions.

Evidently the curtain had been torn a little too hurriedly. Too much of the back-stage had come in view of the plebian crowd. The web of delusion must be woven again. The spell must be bound tighter than ever over the eyes of the simple folk. The saint of the spinning wheel and the Swarajist lawyer set out for Cawnpur to play their incomparable duet at the National Congress, to tame and hypnotise once again the truculent spirit of the people

LXVIII

CAMOUFLAGE AT CAWNPUR AND SURRENDER AT SABARMATI.

UNDER the inexorable pressure of the laws of political dynamics the swing to the right continued in the Swaraj party. As this party arose out of the ashes of the non-co-operation movement—the movement of mass revolution—to ostensibly try the new path of parliamentary obstruction, the Responsivist wing was evolved out of the main body of the party to more openly negotiate with British Imperialism in the interests of the capitalists and the upper middle classes. The logic of the Responsivists was irresistible. When Mr. Tambe's acceptance of Executive Councillorship was condemned by the Swarajist leadership at Nagpur, Messrs. Jayakar and Kelkar, the fathers of the new reaction, assumed a defiant attitude and raised some pertinent questions. What was the strict dividing line between Mr. Patel's election to the President's chair and Mr. Tambe's nomination to the Executive Council? Why was it wrong to co-operate with the Government as an elected minister if it was right to co-operate on Select Committees and Government Commissions? In other words if you have slipped away so far from the rigid path of uncompromising opposition, why can we not go a little further "to work for the country" and serve the nation? The Responsivist leaders resigned from the Council of the Swaraj party with an air of injured innocence to fight their cause more effectively at the Cawnpur Congress.

It was destined, however, to be an unequal struggle. The dice were heavily loaded in favour of the Swaraj party. The great prophet of the N. C. O. movement readily threw his ample cloak of snowwhite khaddar round the decayed and decomposing remains of the Swarajist programme. For he and his pocket Congress Committee had already pledged themselves to place the whole machinery of the Congress at the disposal of Pandit Nehru and his party. All that appeared necessary was to impose effectively on the radicalism of the petty bourgeoisie and the

credulity of the masses. And this purpose was ably accomplished by Messrs Gandhi, Nehru and Company at Cawnpur by proposing oratorical threats which were not really meant to threaten anybody and theatrical stunts which could cut no ice.

The following were the principal political decisions of the Cawnpur Congress:

(1) To give fullest support to the Parliamentary policy of the Swaraj party.

(2) To invite other political parties (that is the parties of the Right) irrespective of beliefs to join the Congress.

(3) To support the Commonwealth of India Bill (drafted by Mrs. Besant and her moderate allies and turned down by the Swarajists about a year and a half ago).

(4) To fix the goal of the nationalist movement as Dominion Status—Self-government within the Empire.

(5) To call upon the Swarajist members to vacate their parliamentary seats if the Government reject the "National Demand."

(6) To call a special meeting of the A. I. C. C. to frame a programme of work to be carried out throughout the country including the education of the electors regarding the fothcoming elections (fixed for the end of 1926), mass civil disobedience, etc.

(7) To change the policy of the Congress as soon as the Government "will make a sincere and magnanimous gesture".

(8) Reiteration and slight relaxation of the spinning franchise.

Let us see how Mr. Gandhi viewed his own handiwork. Naturally be took his pet franchise first. "It is clear *that the Swarajists may nat leave khaddar and still retain their hold on the electorate.*" ("Young India" 7th January 1926). So Mr. Gandhi keenly relished that the Swarajists should exploit to the utmost his sacred franchise (as they had exploited his great name) to win the ensuing elections. And indeed the sovereign purpose of winning the elections within a few months runs like a string

through all the slogans and catchwords so liberally used at the Congress.

"The Council Resolution is an elaborate affair" wrote Mr. Gandhi. So it had to be, lest the unsophisticated public might divine the real truth of the matter. Much capital was, of course, made of the threatened walk-out from the Legislative Assembly. But had not the "National Demand" been already rejected more than once without evoking any retaliatory measures from the Swarajist side? Nay, more. Had they not gone on ceaselessly watering down their demands in the Councils and outside in the fervent hope of securing the assent of their Imperialist masters? The more they had been kicked the lower they had succumbed. There was, therefore, no sense in pitching anything on a fresh rebuff from Government. By all canons of political honesty and common decency the Swarajist should have either walked out the very first time Government turned down the national demand—such as it was—or should have embarked on unflinching and uncompromising policy of parliamentary obstruction and biting exposure worthy of the best Irish traditions. Having, however overstayed their time and lowered their flag in dust they now sought to recover something of their lost glory by rivetting all attention on the new stage-thunder. It was obviously their last and only chance to reinstate themselves in the estimation of the gullible public and to win the new elections.

Mr. Gandhi then referred te the Responsivist rebellion. "Superficial observers may regard the split in the Swarajist camp as unfortunate...But surely it is not unfortunate that we should bravely and honestly confesses our fundamental differences and work them out...And so long as they respect one another and honestly push forward their views the people can only gain by their presentaion." Not a word, be it noted, in condemnation of the Responsivists heresy. Not a syllable to uphold the sacred principle of non-co-operation against the doctrine of walking straigh into the Government parlour. In fact it is notorious that the door for future negotiations with the Responsivists was deliberately kept open though their amendment was defeated in the Congress session.

The threatened walk-out from the Councils was dismissed by Mr. Gandhi with these words; "It is a clear notice to the

Government and *an equally clear indication to the electors as to what they are to expect from the Swaraj party.*" So even in the Mahatma's opinion the walk-out was primarily intended to pander to the radical proclivities of the election agents and the petty bourgeoisie section of the electorate.

Most significant of all are Mr. Gandhi's remarks on the resolution regarding civil disobedience. "The emphasis laid on civil disobodience is, in my opinion, quite appropriate. No nation can possibly march forward without a sanction to enforce its will. *The reiteration of faith in civil disobedience means that the representatives of the nation have no faith in armed rebellion.* Civil disobedience may be a far cry. It may be nearer than many imagine. Time is irrelevamt. Cultivation of the spirit of non-violent resistance is everything." One thing was thus placed beyond the pale of doubt. The one man who was expected to launch a nation-wide movement of civil disobedience had neither present nor prospective intention of doing so. The resolution certainly did nothing to bring the day of the battle any nearer. On the contrary, the prophet of *Satyagraha* only intended to use the resolution to stem the rising tide of the revolutionary movement. Why then was this irrelevant resolution squeezed in between council recipes and election stunts? Surely not because Pandit Nehru seriously intended to sound the bugles of the holy war. He had obviously set his heart on getting into the Assembly rather than into the prison cell. The answer must again be the same. The whole paraphernalia of the war of 1920-21 had to be revived in the memories of men to wipe out the ugly impressions of the Swarajist sell-out in the Council and to set the stage for a dramatic victory at the election.

The whole policy and programme of the Cawnpur Congress were thus meant to serve one single purpose. We will walk out now at the fag end of the session to cover all our sins but return again to tbe Councils, said the Swarajists. Mr. Gandhi stood away from the Councils but blessed them. They united to defeat the Responsivists but left the door ajar for further discussions. Any compromise was unthinkable at Cawnpur lest the ignorant multitude so successfully hoodwinked with the

combined arts of the saint and the politician might fly away in doubt and fear.

The camouflage was complete for the moment. But like the mists of the night it began to evaporate in thin air on the very morrow of the Congress meeting.

From the early beginning of the new year, 1926, the Swaraj party began to climb down hurriedly from the pompous position it had assumed at the Congress. The annual show having been successfully staged they naturally began to divest themselves of the theatrical costumes and clap-trap. The leading members of the Right resigned their seats in the Legislatures—Central and Provincial—and declared their intention to seek re-election on their programme of Responsive Co-operation. The Swarajist leaders were completely outwitted. They immediately made it understood that if the responsivist leaders were re-elected the party would find it neeessary to modify its programme. Needless to say the Responsivist leaders succeeded at the re-elections. So negotiations were resumed between the two wings of the Swaraj party in the salubrious climate of Delhi.

Throughout the winter session of the Legislative Assembly the Swarajists did not follow any policy of obstruction as they had decided to walk out of the Assembly in the course of the Budget debate. The discussion on the general Budget began on 4th March. A meeting of the A. I. C. C. held on 6th and 7th March at Delhi issued peremptory instruction to the Swarajist members to act on the Cawnpur Resolution. The detailed demands were tabled on the 8th. After Mr. Jinnah's motion for the adjournment of the Customs grant was defeated by a large majority Pandit Motilal Nehru rose to make his final speech to the House. He said that the terms of honourable co-operation effected by the late Mr. Das had been contemptuously rejected by the Government. They had worked the reforms for two years and a half and they felt they had been humiliated. Some of the noblest sons of India had been shut up in jails. Finally, he warned the Government that unless it took care it would find the whole country honeycombed with secret societies. On the conclusion of his speech he walked out with all his followers.

A short interlude characteristic of the Swarajist mentality might be noted in passing. After the Swarajist walk-out, Sir Alexander Muddiman made a brief reply on behalf of the Government. Then the president, Mr. V. J. Patel, adjourned the House after making an announcement which made a profound sensation. He declared that as the strongest party had vacated the Chamber, the Assembly had ceased to retain its representative character required by the Government of India Act. It was, therefore, for the Government to consider whether the Assembly should continue to function. He finally asked the Government not to introduce any controversial legislation, as otherwise he might be forced to use the emergency powers accorded under the Act, of adjourning the House *sine die.*

Having effectively manoeuvred the stage-thunder the President had no difficulty in beating a hasty retreat the very next morning. After giving fulsome assurances that he had not meant to cast any reflection on any members of the House, the President stated: "What the Chair intended to emphasise was that the Government should not take advantage of numerical weakness of the representatives (of the people) in the House and bring forward measures of a highly controversial nature except such as were necessary of the discharge of their responsibilities and the carrying on of the administration. I might add further that I felt on reflection that the Chair should not have made reference to its own powers or have used language which might perhaps be construed as a threat to the Government, but should have awaited further development before deciding on my course of action."

Even the President had to play the stage-trick to win the next election and tho Swarajist votes for re-election to the Chair.

The Responsivists made a new move after the Delhi session when they organised a Conference in Bombay on 3rd April with a view to from a new national party composed of Responsivists, Independents and Moderates. The deliberations were attended by Sir T. B. Sapru, Mr. M. A. Jinnah, Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Jayaker. The Conference ended in the formation of an Indian National Party "to prepare for and accelarate the establishment of Swaraj or full responsible Government in India such as obtains in the self-governing Dominions of the British Empire with due

provision for the protection of the rights and interests of minorities and the backward and depressed classes." It was resolved that the new party would employ all peaceful and legitimate means (not including mass civil disobedience or general non-payment of taxes) with liberty as and when necessary to resort to Responsive Co-operation inside the Legislatures. Mr. Jayaker did not join the new organisation until the matter had been considered by his party.

The Responsivist bombshell brought the Swarajists to their knees. Pandit Nehru, a past master in the arts of political sabre-rattling, blew hot and cold at the same time. First he attacked the new party as a direct challenge to the Swarajists and ridiculed it as a conglomerate in the first stage of geological formation. Under the smoke-screen of these fulminations the Pandit began to win over the Responsivists from their new allies. It was hurriedly decided to hold a meeting of the two wings of the Swaraj party on 21st April 1926 in Mr. Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati to explore the avenues of unity. Mr. Gandhi was present at the meeting which was attended by Pandit Nehru, Mrs. Naidu, Lala Lajpat Rai, Messrs Jayaker and Kelkar and Dr. Moonje. Subject to the confirmation of the A. I. C. C. it was agreed among the signatories to the Sabarmati pact that the response made by the Government to the national demand of February 1924 should be considered satisfactory in the Provinces if "the power, responsibility and initiative necessary for the effective discharge of their duties are secured to the ministers." The sufficiency of such power etc. in each province was left to the decision of the Congress members of the Councils concerned subject to confirmation by a committee consisting of Messrs. Jayaker and Nehru.

LXIX

FROM CONSTRUCTIVE CO-OPERATION TO COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE.

THE STAGE was now set for the inevitable and eventual surrender to Responsivist Opportunism. The Sabarmati Pact had been quietly dropped by the Swarajist leaders. But the mentality behind the Sabarmati sell-out remained intact. It was the elections that practically dominated the determination of policies and tactics at the Cawnpur Congress. These elections were now over. Except in Madras, the Swarajists had visibly diminished in power, while the Responsivists had added to their numbers. Even the ministries had already been formed. While the Responsivist leaders honestly accepted ministerial offices in the Central Provinces with the support of their colleagues in the Council, the Swarajists, who formed the decisive majority in the Madras Council, were supposed to support a ministry which they could easily wreck in the new year. It was also an open secret that in Bombay and most of the Provinces the Swarajists had tacitly acquiesced in, if they had not actively assisted, the formation of new ministries.

What then was the duty of the Congress members in the Assembly, and specially in the Provinces? Were they to be asked to walk out again as they had done in the winter of 1926? Or were they to adopt the orthodox Swarajist policy of "uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction"? Or were they to silently succumb to the Responsivist policy in the sacred name of "a policy of self-reliance and resistance to evil"? Above all, should they seek to destory the newly formed ministries at all costs or should they in effect make common cause with the Responsivists and Nationalist Congressmen to lend discriminating support to the new ministers in the holy name of constructive work and national growth?

The Congress answered all these questions by adopting the following Resolution:

"The Congress reiterates its resolve that the general policy of Congressmen in the Assembly and the various Councils shall be one of self-reliance in all activities which make for the healthy growth of the nation and of determined resistance to every activity, governmental or other, that may impede the nation's progress towards Swaraj. In particular, Congressmen in the legislatures shall,

(*a*) Refuse to accept ministership or other office in the gift of the Government and oppose the formation of the ministry by other parties until in the opinion of the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee a satisfactory response is made by the Government to the National Demand;

(*b*) Subject to clause (d) refuse supplies and throw out budgets until such response is made by the Government or unless otherwise directed by the All-India Congress Committee.

(*c*) Throw out all proposals for legislative enactments by which the bureaucracy proposes to consolidate its powers.

(*d*) Move Resolutions and introduce and support measures and bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of national life and the advancement of the economic, agricultural, industrial and commercial interests of the country, and for the protection of the freedom of person, speech, association and of the press, and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy.

(*e*) Take steps to improve the condition of agricultural tenants by introducing and supporting measures to secure fixity of tenure and other advantages with a view to ensure a speedy amelioration of the condition of the tenants, and

(*f*) Generally protect the rights, agricultural and industrial, and adjust on an equitable basis the relations between landlords and tenants, capitalists and workmen.

He who runs may read the differences in spirit and tactics between the Resolutions adopted at Cawnpur and Gauhati. No

high-sounding formulas of self-reliance and resistance to Govern ment oppression can serve to conceal the depth of the fall.

The dramatic tactics of walk-out were definitely ruled out, even though the Government had rejected the "national demand" many times over. Why was it not necessary for the Congress members in the Assembly and the Provincial Councils to vacate their Parliamentary seats in 1927 if it was deemed necessary to dissociate themselves from all Council activities in this theatrical manner in the winter of 1926 ? It is interesting, however, to note that nobody put this question before the Congress. Nobody deemed it his worthwhile to answer it. For it was implicitly understood that the resounding thunder-clap having served its purpose during the last elections there was no use or sense in repeating it.

The walk-out having been thus ruled out the Congress had no difficulty in slipping deeper into the slush and mire of Responsive Co-operation. The fall had, however, to be graduated lest the hypocrisy of the shameful manoeuvres behind the scenes might be too clearly exposed. Ministerial offices were, therefore, to be refused and the formation of ministries by other parties were to be opposed. But not unconditionally. The condition was the satisfactory response by the Government to the national demand. This condition must indeed be pronounced as farcical as the Congress leaders knew very well that there was not a ghost of a chance of Government taking any new step in this direction within the next few months. The very tentativeness, therefore, of this clause was obviously designed to screen the active assistance or implicit acquiescence given by the Congress members in many councils in the formation of ministries.

Similarly, the refusal of supplies and rejection of budgets were also made conditional. Further, they were made subject to the clause (d) which virtually asked the Congress members to pursue the constructive programme so dear to the heart of Mr. Gandhi through the medium of the Councils. Obviously you cannot indiscriminately reject budgets and supplies if you have to fight at the same time for allocation of more funds for the nation-building departments. The second clause, therefore, cut straight the through first one and rendered it practically nugatory. The dramatic slogan of refusal of supplies was also trotted out once again in order to cover

up more active, vigorous and persistent co-operation in the day-to-day tasks of the new Councils.

The last two clauses must indeed be condemned as the most hypocritical of them all. The Swarajists, as we have pointed out before, had already entered into an unholy pact with the industrialists and capitalists of the country. And yet they were not ashamed to swear by "the rights of labour, agricultural and industrial" in order to mask their counter-revolutionary activities. The Congress did not engage itself in any of the mighty industrial disputes between labourers and their employers, whether private or governmental. The rich leaders of the Congress did not move their little finger to help, still less to initiate any of the great strike activities in which various sections of workers were compelled to engage for the protection or the betterment of their miserable wages and conditions of work. Nor did they contribute a single penny to any strike fund while they lavishly burnt hundreds of thousands of rupees every year at the sacred altar of khaddar. And yet, the Congress leaders had the brazen-faced audacity to repeat pious formulas about labour organisation and the rights of labour at every Congress Session with the sturdy determination to betray them during the rest of the year.

It is again significant to note that no reference to civil disobedience was deemed necessary to be made in the Resolution on constructive work which Pandit Motilal Nehru moved at this Congress Session. Obviously the bogus slogan had served its purpose at the elections and could now be safely withdrawn. No more walk-outs. No more incitements to civil disobedience. Dig your trenches deep in the Councils to support the ministers and bargain with Government albeit under the transparent cover of a dignified Parliamentary opposition. And spin for all you are worth if you are not lucky enough to be elected to the Councils. This was in effect the shameful and dishonourable message of the Gauhati Congress.

This was, indeed, reaction pure and simple. The veil of words was worn too thin. Political backsliding had to be covered up somehow. Khaddar and the spinning wheel again proved handy. Had not the great Mahatma himself used them to cover up his counter-revolutionary march in 1924? Of course, the spinning franchise had been subsequently relaxed to accommodate the big politicians. The khaddar livery could serve more

effectively as the insignia of militant politics. It had to be worn up-till-now only on ceremonial occasions. The interpretation of these words had been left to individual conscience. Many Swarajist Congressmen thus ran the risk of being mistaken for Nationalists or Responsivists whose opportunist tactics could hardly be distinguished from theirs. The Gauhati Congress, therefore, made it obligatory on all Congressmen to "habitually wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar".

Then there was Mr. Gandhi to be considered. He was certainly pleased to see the khaddar franchise stiffened. The Swarajists once again earned his silent blessings. He spoke only two Resolutions in the open Congress. He moved the first Resolution on the murder of Swami Shardhanand and the second one on Indians in South Africa. It was Mr. Gandhi's pleasant task "to welcome the Round Table Conference......sitting in South Africa to deliberate on the best method of dealing with the question of the status of Indians in that Sub-Continent" and to "pray for Divine blessing and guidance upon its deliberations". On the political issues that faced the Congress he maintained a Sphinx-like silence. Hadn't he, however, placed himself and his pocket Congress unreservedly at the disposal of Pandit Motilal Nehru since the death of Deshabandhu Das? And why should he worry over the inevitable dilution of Congress politics after he had exerted himself so strenuously to crowd all the reactionaries, capitalists and even Government job.seekers and flunkeys in the Congress under the spacious banner of the spinning-wheel? Thanks mainly to his efforts the Besantites, the Responsivists and even the Nationalists now occupied an honourable place on the Congress platform. The Sabarmati Pact had been signed and sealed under his sacred roof. And though it had to be discarded under the emergencies of the ensuing elections, Mr. Gandhi may be presumed to have been more than satisfied with the comparatively more sober and sincere trend of the Gauhati decisions. For, if Congressmen could now work on the constructive programme through the Councils while he and his No-changer friends worked it from outside, well, why not?

The shameful implications of the Gauhati Resolutions were soon brought to the surface by the inexorable march of events. The Congressmen who had been specially ordered to "oppose the

formation of a ministry by other parties" had already begun to co-operate with ministers in the most whole-hearted manner in most Provinces. But then they had the specious excuse of being in a minority which could not, with the best will in the world, overthrow any ministers. They had, therefore, no alternative but to offer constructive co-operation under the remaining clauses of the Gauhati Resolution. Responsivists accepted office in the Central Provinces with the open support of their colleagues in the Council. But then they practised at last what they had been preaching all these years. The Swarajist in the Madras Council, however, could not shield their co-operationist tactics under either of these excuses. They professed to be the staunchest of Congressmen. They possessed a decisive majority in the Council. They could, therefore, easily dethrone any present or prospective ministry set up by Government. In fact, they had the golden opportunity of repeating the heroic feats of Mr. Das in Bengal by destroying the hated system of dyrachy in Madras. But they did nothing of the kind. And their shameful conduct—said to have been pursued with the implicit consent of Mr. Srinivas Iyengar, the Congress President—assumed the proportions of a first class hot scandal in all Congress circle in India.

The whole question of Congress tactics in the Councils came before the Congress Working Committee when it met in Bombay on 16th May 1927. The Committee " considered the matter fully and unanimously arrived at the formula contained in the following instructions issued to the Congress party in several Legislatures:

> "The Working Committee hereby instructs the Congress party in the several Legislatures that their duty under clause (a) of Resolution V. of the Gauhati Congress is to prevent the functioning of dyarchy as such wherever possible and does not impose on them the duty to defeat a ministry if the result of such action is in the judgment of the party likely to strengthen the bureaucracy or any anti-national party and is further of opinion that it is desirable for the Congress party in the several Legislatures to co-operate with the other parties for the purpose of carrying out the policy and programme laid down in clauses (c) (d) (e) and (f) of the said Resolution".

Having laid down the law in this way the Working Committee had no difficulty in convincing itself that the Congress

party in Madras had "done nothing inconsistent either with the ultimate object of the Congress, the attainment of Swaraj, or with the spirit and letter of the Gauhati Resolution." Not content with exonerating the Madras Swarajists, the Working Committee went one step further by adding that "the Madras Council party deserves the thanks of the Congress and the country" for having prevented "the strengthening of the bureaucracy by means of an alliance with the reactionary Non-Brahmin party".

After an interval of full one year—necessitated by the new elections—the Sabarmati sell-out was thus fully consummated and that too by the President of the Congress himself. Unity was secured in the Congress ranks—at the price of honour. The principle of ruthless, unflinching Parliamentary opposition so heroically established by Mr. Das was now brazen-facedly sacrificed for a mess of pottage. The militant politicians of yesterday revealed themselves as cowardly tricksters and hypocritical twisters. The illusions of Cawnpur were now thoroughly destroyed. Even the thin gauze manipulated at Gauhati was torn to ribbons.

Never had the votaries of non-co-operation and civil disobedience, of wreckage and destruction, fallen to such a depth of shame and degradation before. It was, indeed, the zero hour of Congress politics.

And then a thunder-clap!

On the 8th November, 1927, the Viceroy announced the appointment of the Statutory Commission under the presidentship of Sir John Simon. The Viceroy explained in detail the object of the Commission and stated that with a view to elicit the Indian opinion on the subject the British Parliament intended to invite the Central Legislature to appoint a Joint Select Committee "which would draw up its views and proposals and lay them before the Commission".

The appointment of this All-British Commission on reforms raised a veritable storm in the political atmosphere of India.. The spontaneous reception which all the political parties of India including the Congress as well as the Liberals gave immediately to the Government annoucement could be summed up in one word

"Boycott." On November 10th the president of the Congress issued a statement advising the whole country to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form in the following words :

> "I rejoice greatly at the wonderful unanimity of opinion that this announcement has evoked in India, and our leaders have fully realised their responsibility and acted upon the principle that the task of leadership is to mobilise opinion and not to wait upon the future. Immediate action of an unqualified character is indicated as the only fitting reply to the insolent and deliberate challenge which the British Government have hurled in the face of the Indian people and of all patriotic workers.........It was a challenge, therefore, on their part to the manhood and womanhood of India to boycott the Commission if they dared".
>
> "The statement of the Government that if we have a strong case we could persuade the Commission and the Joint Select Committee of both the Houses is a severe tax upon our credulity.....................What is the evidence that is necessary, and what is the judgment that can be pronounced ? The demand in the Legislative Assembly twice made for the grant of full responsible government and for a Round Table Conference or Convention to settle amicably between the two peoples the terms of the new constitution for India is there. The demand of the Congress is there. The demand of all political parties and of the country as a whole for Swaraj is there. As the British Government requires us to demonstrate our fitness for Swaraj, the evidence of a conclusive character that we can now furnish consists in the completest and most unqualified and effective boycott of this Commission in all its parts and aspects".

A few days later the Liberals and the Nationalists including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.A. Jinnah also hastened to urge the boycott of the Commission in the following words :

> "We have come to the deliberate conclusion that the exclusion of Indians from the Commission is fundamentally

wrong and that the proposals about the Committees of legislatures being allowed to submit their views to the Commission and later to confer with the Joint Parliamentary Committee are wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of the case......Unless a Commission on which the British and Indian statesmen are invited to sit on equal terms is set up we cannot conscientiously take any part or share in the work of the Commission as at present constituted.

The whole country was lashed to a pitch of fury and indignation as it had not known for many years. Monster meetings and processions, passionate appeals and tempestuous orations became the order of the day. It was in the wake of the stormy agitation that the 42nd Session of the Congress was held at Madras in Christmas week of 1927 under the Presidentship of Dr. Ansari.

How the Congress leaders were suddenly compelled to re-adjust their whole political front by the rising tide of mass agitation in the country could best be gauged from the following operative clauses of the Boycott Resolutions adopted by the Madras Congress:

"A. This Congress calls upon the people of India and all Congress organisations in the country (1) to organise mass demonstrations on the day of the arrival of the Commission in India......(2) to organise public opinion by vigorous propaganda so as to persuade Indians of all shades of political opinion effectively to boycott the Commission.

"B. The Congress calls upon the non official members of the Indian Legislatures etc. not to give evidence before the Commission, nor co-operate with it in any manner, public or private, nor attend or participate in any social functions given to them.

"C. This Congress calls upon the non-official members of the Indian Legislatures (1) neither to vote for nor serve on Select Committees that may be set up in conjunction with this Commission, (2) to throw out every other proposal, motion or demand for grant that may be moved in connection with the work of the Commission.

"D. This Congress also calls upon the non-official members of the Legislatures not to attend meetings at the Legislatures except for the purpose of preventing their seats being declared vacant or for the purpose of making the boycott effective and successful, or for the purpose of throwing out a ministry or of opposing any measure which in the opinion of the Working Committee of the Congress is detrimental to the interests of India.

"E. This Congress authorises the Working Committee to confer with and secure the co-operation wherever possible of other organisations and parties with a view to make the boycott effective and complete".

Thus the Congress was not only compelled to shift its attention from tactics in Councils to mass agitation and propaganda in the country, but to change its policy even in the Councils in a very drastic manner.

If we compare the Clause B. C. & D. of the above Resolution with the Council Resolution of the preceding Congress we find that all references to constructive co-operation were suddenly dropped in view of the great political landslide. In fact, activity in the Councils was sought to be reduced to the lowest minimum compatible with the retention of seats. No more co-operation in the name of the healthy growth of national life and advancement of the true interests of the country. No more of bargaining with ministers and nominated members on the hypocritical plea of improving the condition of agricultural and industrial labourers. Keep out of the Councils as far as you can and walk in just when necessary to throttle and impede the machinery of Government and the hated Commission. This was the word that went out from the Madras Congress. Very different from cowardly and pusillanimous message of the Gauhati Session.

Nay more, the Congress adopted a long Resolution on the religious and political unity of the Hindu. Mohammedan and Sikh communities in India. Further, the Congress welcomed "the formation of the League against Imperialism, at the Congress against Imperialism, held at Brussels in February, 1927, and approved of the decision of the All-India Congress Committee to associate itself with this organisation in the struggle against

Imperialism." The Congress also sent its warmest greetings to the people of China and its assurance of full sympathy with them in their fight for emancipation. The Congress even adopted a Resolution aginst British preparations for war in India and in the Eastern Seas. And the Congress leaders who had funked and fumbled only a few months ago over the most heroic struggle that General Awari was then waging in Nagpur in the name of the Indian Republic now hastened to congratulate "the leader of the Arms Act Satyagraha Movement of Nagpur and his followers on their sturdy patriotism and self-sacrifice, and expressed the deepest sympathy of the nation on the 75th day of hunger-strike of Mr. Awari".

The place of honour must, however, be accorded to the Resolution on independence which will forever make the Madras Congress memorable in the political history of India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru moved that "this Congress declare the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence." It will be remembered that Maulana Hasrat Mohani earned a sentence of two years rigorous imprisonment for moving such a Resolution for the first time in the Ahmedabad Congress of 1921. Thanks to Mr. Gandhi's opposition, it was rejected by the Congress. Since then the issue of complete independenee had often been raised at the successive session of the Congress. But it met with no better success. It was now only under the stress of the shame and humiliation heaped upon the Congress leaders by the Government appointment of an All-British Commission that they were lashed into adopting the novel creed of complete independence.

Was then a real revolution effected in the minds and hearts of Congress men at Madras? Had the leaders scrapped their merchant mentality of higgling and bargaining with Government over bits and shreds of constitutional freedom? Were they really determined to burn their boats on the vital issue of the supreme sovereignty of the Indian Republic? The measure of this change could best be judged from the following Resolution adopted by the Madras Congress after it had greeted with full-throated ovations the Resolution on independence:

> "Having regard to the general desire of all political parties in the country to unite together in settling a Swaraj constitution, and having considered the various drafts submitted

to it, and the various suggestions received in reply to the Working Committee's circular, this Congress authorises the Working Committee which shall have power to co-pt, to confer with similar committees to be appointed by other organisations, political, labour, commercial and communal in the country, and to draft a Swaraj constitution for India on the basis of a declaration of rights, and to place the same for consideration and approval before a special convention to be convened in Delhi not later than March, consisting of the All-India Congress Committee and the leaders and representatives of other organisations above-mentioned, and elected members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures."

Now why on earth did the Congress hasten so suddenly to manufacture a full-fledged constitution for India? Obviously because the Simon Commission had been appointed over the heads of the Congress leaders. They were not satisfied with its mere boycott. They wanted to have a finger in the pie. The leaders were lawyers—most of them. If they would not touch the Commission with a pair of tongs they would, at any rate, draft out their own constitution—to be ready for all emergencies. The political weather might change. They might have even to negotiate. At any rate they should not be caught napping. They should have their draft ready to submit to the Gods of Simla and Whitehall. So the Resolution was adopted with a view to future negotiation—and co-operation.

This conjecture was fully borne out by the terms of the Resolution. Having passed the historic Resolution on independence, the Congress, one should imagine, would, if at all, proceed to draft nothing but a constitution of the Indian Republic. But the above Resolution authorised the Working Committee to draft only a Swaraj constitusion. Swaraj had been the battle cry of all parties in India—including the Liberals, the Nationalists, and even the worst of toadies and flunkeys. Swaraj had been inscribed in the constitution of the Congress itself. And it had been changed to complete independence precisely because it had been found to be vague enough to be synonimous with Dominion Status. Obviously the Congress leaders thus designed to admit Dominion Status by the back door after pompously dismissing it by the front door.

Why else would the Working Committee be authorised to draft the new constitution in co-operation with similar committees appointed by other organisation, political, labour, etc? And why would the new constitution be submitted for the approval of a Convention including the leaders and representatives of other organisations, and the elected members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures? It was quite notorious that most of these other organisations and non-Congress members of the Legislatures were quite prepared to be satisfied with even less than Dominion Status. Any constitution formulated or approved by such a heterogeneous Committee or Convention would only represent the largest common factor of the demands of all the parties in India. And the Congress must be obviously construed to have designed to give respectful consideration to such a puerile and worthless draft constitution such as only could be produced by such an All-Parties Conference with any degree of unanimity.

Let us see how Pundit Jahawarlal Nehru, the rising star of Young India's hopes and aspirations, vieved the situation. In the course of his Presidential address at the Republican Congress held in the Congress Pandal on the 28th December, he summed up the situation thus:

"Some people said that now that the National Congress declared its goal to be full national independence there was no necessity for a Republican Congress...Even though the Congress passed a resolution of independence a new organisation should be formed to carry on propaganda and try to convert those who had vague ideas of independence and did not know what Republicanism was. The object of the Resolution of independence passed by the Congress was the withdrawal of the British from India. It ought to be the duty of the new organisation to lay stress on things which were to be done to give effect to the Resolution of independence......Since the failure of the Non-co-operation Movement the Congress had been drifting to middle class or Babu politics and was losing the support of the masses......It was important for them to form some kind of an organisation which would keep the National Congress up to the mark and also prepare the country, not only in a Republican ideal, but also in a right Republican ideal." ("The Indian Register")

But the Congress ship had already prepared to founder below the mark.

And how did Mr. Gandhi greet the resolution on complete independence which he had so successfully fought for many years past? It was generally understood all over the country that he did his level best to damn it with faint praise in private discussions. But the Government appointment of an All-British Commission naturally served to weaken Gandhi's stand against the new battle-cry of "Young India." Moreover, if he did not worship the rising sun, he undoubtedly recognised a promising political genius in young Nehru—the real inspirer and originator of this Resolution—and he did not consider it prudent to assail him at the very outset of his new political career. He probably treated the Resolution as a freak of youthful enthusiasm which could best be treated with a condescending smile. Let him enjoy his turn. Mine will come on the morrow. For the father—Motilal Nehru—the leader of the orthodox Congress Party and the would-be draftsman of the new 'Swaraj" constitution—was bound sooner or later to come to a clash with his son, young Nehru, the leader of the new Republican Party. Then would Mr. Gandhi quietly step in as the mediator between the father and the son—the older generation ready for Dominion Status and the new pining for the Indian Republic. And would then perhaps snatch the reigns of power from the hands of both.

That moment came—sooner than perhaps any of them imagined—when Mr. Gandhi made a spectacular re-entry on the political stage, at the next Congress held at Calcutta in the Christmas of 1928.

LXX

MR. GANDHI RETURNS TO FIGHT FOR THE EMPIRE.

EVENTS moved with kaleidoscopic rapidity from the early beginning of 1928.

On February 2nd Lord Irwin inaugurated the Delhi Session of the Legislative Assembly and appealed for co-operation with the Simon Commission. The members of the Swaraj Party attended the Assembly in full force at the outset to oppose the Reserve Bank Bill, but remained absent when less important topics were discussed. On the 11th February, however, detailed instructions were issued by the Congress Working Committee to command the attendance of members in the Assembly, and yet to reduce participation in its activities to the minimum.

The Simon Commission landed at Bombay on 3rd of February. A national *hartal* was observed throughout the country on that day. Monster processions and big mass meetings were held everywhere to urge the complete boycott of the Commission. There were scuffles between the people and the police in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta on that day. Banners and playcards inscribed with the words "Simon go back" were exhibited in all the big cities and towns.

The members of the Commission travelled straight to Delhi from Bombay. But as the Congress leaders carried the boycott of the Commission even to the length of cutting off its members socially they could not meet them personally.

On February 16th Lala Lajpat Rai moved in the Legislative Assembly a Resolution declaring that the constitution and scheme of the Commission were wholly unacceptable to the House and that the Assembly would have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage or in any form. The counter proposition was put forward by Mohammedan members in support of the Commission. Finally, the boycott Resolution was carried in the Assembly by 68 votes against 62.

On February 26th Sir John Simon published his plan of a Joint Free Conference over which he should preside and which should consist of seven British Commissioners and a corresponding body of representatives chosen by the Indian Legislatives. Lest the gullible public of India might be deluded or misguided by the specious arguments of Sir John, the Congress leaders issued within two or three hours of the' publication of Sir John Simon's letter, the following statement:

> "We have most carefully considered the line of procedure indicated in the Statement of Sir John Simon issued to-day. But our objections to the Commission as constituted and the scheme as announced are based on principles which remain unaffected by it. In the circumstances we must adhere to our decision and we cannot have anything to do with the Commission at any stage and in any form".

Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee had issued invitations to the Muslim League, the Liberal Party, the Responsivist Group and any other communal and commercial bodies to the first Session of the All-Parties Conference to draft the new constitution. for India. The Conference met on February 12th at Delhi. As we have anticipated before "the first question discussed by the Conference was the objective to be aimed at in the constitution. It was proposed that the constitution should aim at establishing what is called a dominion form of Government in India. Objection was taken by some members to this on the ground that the Congress had decided in favour of independence as the goal and no lesser goal should be aimed at. It was evident, however, that all the parties represented in the Conference were not prepared to go so far. Therefore, it was suggested that a formula might be agreed upon which would include both the view points..........The proposal to adopt the formula of full responsible government was, therefore, accepted with the clear understanding that those who believed in independence would have the fullest liberty to carry on propaganda and otherwise work for it.

Thus ended the first battle to be waged between the large majority loyal to Dominion Status and the small but virile minority of the champions of complete independence. The lawyer-like formula of "full responsible status" solved nothing and left a

blazing trial of discontent which flared into a conflagration at many a time during the year.

The Conference also passed Resolution dealing with the redistribution of Provinces, the electorate and reservation of seats. Finally, the Conference adjourned on the 22nd February after appointing a Committee to deal with the details of the constitution.

The Conference met again on the 19th May in Bombay when it resolved to appoint "a committee consisting of Pandit Motilal Nehru as chairman, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Immam, Mr. Pradhan, Mr. Sahib Qureshi, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, Mr. M.S. Aney, Mr. M.R. Jayakar, Mr. N.M. Joshi and Sardar Mangal Singh to consider and determine the principles of the constitution for India before the 1st July next," and to give "the fullest consideration to the Resolution of the Madras Congress on communal unity in conjection with those passed" by the different communal bodies of India. This Committee finally produced the famous Nehru Report which will be dealt with in due course.

While the big bourgeois lawyers of the Congress were busy drafting the future constitution of India, the workers and peasants were already engaged in a life and death struggle on many a battle-field against their tyrannical employers and Government.

"The growth of communist propaganda and influence" writes the official draftsman of "India in 1928/29", "especially among the industrial classes of certain large towns, caused anxiety to the authorities........ Among the strikes which occurred during the year were those in Tata Iron and Steel Mills at Jamshedpur. the East Indian Railway, the South Indian Railway and the Fort Gloster Jute Mills in Bengal. In nearly one-third of the strikes the workers succeeded in obtaining concession." By far the most outstanding of these was the General Strike in the Textile Mills of Bombay which lasted from the 26th April to the 6th October, and involved the loss of three and a half crores of rupees in wages to the workers and over two million working days to the industry. It was, indeed, the most epic labour struggle that has yet been recorded in the history of the Indian working classes. Even the Congress Secretary's Report for the year 1928 testified to the "wonderful solidarity and tenacity in

continuing the strike for six months inspite of hunger and every kind of pressure from the employers and the Government".

Almost parallel to the Mill Strike in Bombay ran the course of the No-Tax Campaign in Bardoli. To quote again from the Congress Report: "The Bardoli *Satyagraha* Movement organised by the peasantry of Bardoli Taluka under the able leadership of Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel was a remarkable example of the efficacy of well-organised peaceful resistance to official repression. The peasants objected to the re-assessment of the Taluka and declared that it had been carried out without any proper investigation and was, in fact, utterly at variance with existing condition.........Having exhausted all gentler methods of persuasion they started *Satyagraha* (April 24) and refused to pay any revenue. Methods of terrorism were resorted to and land and cattle were sold for ridiculous prices. But the peasantry held together and refused to be cowed down into submission. They succeeded ultimately in making their organised strength felt and the Government had to yield to their demand for an enquiry ....The *Satyagraha*, ending in the victory of the peasantry, was hailed with joy by the peasantry all over the country." The Report of the Enquiry Committee virtually set at naught the recommendations of the revision officer. The Bombay Government accepted this recommendation. The victory of the peasantry was thus complete.

A more radical campaign was launched in Burma during the same year. A new Capitation tax was levied on the Burmese peasantry while the prices of rice and other raw produce were tumbling down. No wonder that "A no-tax campaign was inaugurated in certain districts in Burma.........local associations were formed in each town to resist the collection of taxes... . There were many instances of assault, violence and murder and on several occasions the police were attacked. Reinforcements and military police were sent to the affected districts and a large number (hundreds) of village associations were declared unlawful assemblies. In the Tharrawaddy district the movement assumed a revolutionary type". ("India" 1228-29 Official Review).

Unmindful of these momentous events in an Indian Province the Committee of the Nationalist leaders appointed by the All Parties Conference in May 1928 continued its constitutional discussions

under the guidance of Pandit Motilal Nehru. The far-famed Nehru report was published on the 10th of August. It bore the signatures of eight gentlemen including those of Pandit Nehru as representing the Congress, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, leader of the Liberals, Sir Ali Imam (at one time a member of Governor General's Executive Council), as representing the Muslims, and Sardar Mangal Singh as representing the Sikhs. The report was immediately acclaimed in the Press and on the platform as the most far-reaching constitutional scheme jointly produced by the leading political parties of India. The report was also enthusiastically applauded as the Nation's answer to the challenge. Lord Birkenhead, then Secretary of State for India, had repeatedly thrown out to political India to produce a constitution which might gain the united support of the people.

We will not pause here to examine in any detail the communal pact that was settled by the Nehru Committee as a result of hard bargaining between the different factions. Nor is it worth our while to examine the pompous declaration of rights and other constitutional clap trap with which these consummate lawyers sought to cover up the shame of their bond of slavery. For this committee had the brazen-faced audacity to recommend a further setback from even "full responsible government"—as settled at the first Conference at Delhi—to the thrice-cursed formula of Dominion Status. The Committee defended its reactionary doctrine in the following words:—

"At Delhi a phrase capable of a double interpretation—"full responsible government"—was used to avoid a decision on the question of dominion status or independence. The Committee felt, however, that it would be difficult to draw up even the principles of the constitution unless this question was decided at least so far as the draft constitution was concerned ...This choice, in view of the circumstances mentioned above with so many different parties' co-operation, could only be one dominion status... "The majority of the Committee were, therefore, of opinion that the terms of reference to them required the Committee to consider and determine the principles of a constitution for full responsible government on the model of the constitutions of the self-governing dominions"...... Our deciding, as a Committee, in favour of such a constitution simply means that the maximum degree of agreement was only obtainable on this basis. It does not mean that any individual Congressman, much less the Congress itself, has given up or toned

down the goal of complete independence. Those who believe in this goal retain the fullest right to work for it".

The logic of this argument is too sickening for words. As has been pointed out before, the Congress busy bodies put out by the Resolution on independence adopted at the Madras session, cleverly manœuvered to foist the plan of the All Parties Conference of the gullible youngsters. Under cover of this plausible plan they really designed to ally themselves with all the Liberals and Moderates, the landlords and capitalists—the very sections that had been expelled from the Congress by the rising tide of revolutionary fervour in the country. And now the astute Pandit exploited these reactionary elements to beat a hasty retreat from the cherished goal of independence to the haven of Dominion Status—of course, under the aegis of the British Empire.

The Nehru report was submitted to the fourth session of the All Parties Conference at Lucknow on 28th August 1928. The rich Rajah of Mahmudabad—one of the biggest landlords of the United Provinces—welcomed the delegates to the Conference which was held in the historic marble pavilion, Kaisirbagh Baradari, under the Presidentship of Dr. Ansari. The chief Resolution of the session was proposed by Pandit Malaviya in the following terms,

"Without restricting the liberty and action of those political parties whose goal is complete independence this Conference declares:

(1) That the form of government to be established in India should be responsible.

That is to say, a government in which the executive should be responsible to a popularly elected legislature possessing full plenary powers.

(2) That such form of government shall in no event be lower than that of any self-governing dominion".

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, however, adhering strictly to the independence Resolution adopted at the Madras Congress opposed the Dominion constitution set out in the Nehru Report and read

out a special statement on behalf of those who stood uncompromisingly for the complete independence of India. After stating that he and his followers were not prepared to accept the limited constitution based on what is termed Dominion Status, he declared.

"We have decided, however, not to obstruct or hamper the work of this Conference, but we desire to record our considered opinion on this question and to dissociate ourselves from this particular Resolution in so far as it commits us to the expedience of Dominion Status. We shall not take any part in this Resolution by moving amendments or by voting on it".

The original Resolution was eventually put to the vote and carried *mom con* with acclamations. After passing several other Resolutions on comparatively minor subjects and reappointing the Nehru Committee to have the constitution drafted in the shape of a Bill, the Conference was dissolved on the 31st August.

It was on this very day that the Independence for India League was formed at Lucknow by the signatories of the statement on independence at the All Parties Conference.

On the 11th October the Simon Commission landed for the second time at Bombay and began the tour round the country. On its arrival in Poona on the 12th October, the Commission was greeted with a complete. *Hartal* in the city and with hostile demonstrations and continuous cries of "Simon, go back" from a crowd of ten thousand people. Similar demonstrations awaited the Commission in Lahore on the 30th of October. Dispersion of these demonstrations with lathi charges were enacted by the police who deliberately chose Lala Lajpat Rai—who led the boycott procession—as the target of their assault. The brave Lala was severely wounded and passed away on the 17th November. Though the Government tried to white-wash the conduct of the police officials concerned and attributed Lala's death to natural causes, the people of India were convinced that the great patriot and trusted servant of the nation died the death of a hero and a martyr, the victim of the beating he received at the hands of the police about two weeks before.

Meanwhile a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held at Delhi on the 3rd November 1928 to consider the

Lucknow decisions of the All Parties Conference. After an appropriate Resolution was adopted on the heroic death of Lala Lajpat Rai, Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyenger moved the following Resolution.

"(i) This meeting of the A. I. C. C. adheres to the decision of the Madras Congress declaring complete independence to be the goal of the Indian people and is of opinion that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed.

(ii) This Committee accepts the recommendations of the Nehru Committee as agreed to by the Lucknow All Parties Conference for the settlement of the communal difference.

(iii) This Committee cordially congratulates the Nehru Committee for their labours, patriotism and far-sightedness and without prejudice to the Resolution of the Congress relating to complete independence, is of opinion that the recommendations of the Nehru Committee are a great step towards political advance and, without committing itself to every detail, generally approves of them".

It was an open secret that this Resolution had emerged as a result of a stiff tussle between the sponsors of the Independence Movement—Mr. Iyengar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—and those of Dominion Status—Pandit Motilal Nehru and his influential followers. Apparently the independence party succeeded in swinging the pendulum back to complete independence after it had swung off to responsible government and even to Dominion Status. The full connotation of this somewhat ambiguous term, independence, was for the first time expounded as complete severance from the British Empire. And yet the success was more apparent than real. For even this Resolution represented a compromise and a bargain. By its nature, therefore, it was bound to be self-contradictory. How else would the A. I. C. C. that sought to destory the fundamental principle—Dominion Status—of the Nehru Report, congratulate its authors on their "labours, patriotism and far-sigthedness" for having reared up an edifice of empty formulas and unmeaning legalism? If the Nehru Committee had begun at the wrong end, their whole labour should undoubtedly be deemed to have gone wrong. Obsessed, however, by the great prestige of the Nehru junta the independence party got so nervous

at its own temerity in re-establishing the doctrine of complete independence in the first section of the Resolution that it hastened to betray it in the third section by showering encomiums on the reactionary Committee for producing a lop-sided scheme calculated to set back the hand of political progress in India.

Needless to say that after several amendments had been moved and withdrawn and Pandit Motilal Nehru had made his confession of faith covered over with a mass of constitutional verbiage, Mr. Iyengar's original Resolution was carried *nem con*.

But if the Resolution should not have satisfied any champions of complete independence, it certainly left a feeling of bitter discontent in the heart of the older Pandit. Being gifted with more political acumen than his son and his enthusiastic followers, Pandit Motilal Nehru saw a veritable danger signal in the first section of the Resolution which enthroned for the first time the principle of complete severance from the British Empire in a Congress Resolution. He deemed the complimentary words about his report too patronising to satisfy his exalted pride. He had set his heart on securing whole-hearted and unstinted approval of the whole constitutional fabric that he had reared on the bed-rock of Dominion Status. The odds, however, proved too heavy against him at Delhi. With diplomatic suppleness he gracefully bowed down to this storm—only to rise with fresh strength very soon.

Pandit Motilal Nehru had been elected to preside over the Congress session to be held in Calcutta during Christmas week, 1928. "Within a few weeks" he told the committee at Delhi "I shall be riding two horses, one the All Parties Horse, the other the Congress Horse. Unless I can keep both horses well in command I won't try it." The meaning was quite clear. He was determined that whatever happened at the A. I. C. C. Committee at Delhi he was determined to see that the Subjects Committee of the Calcutta Congress and the big Congress itself should set their seal of unqualified approval on the precious document to which he had appended his great signature. But the Delhi Committee itself would meet as the Subjects Committee in Calcutta. How then would it be possible to win over the same Committee that had virtually damned his report with faint praise only a few weeks ago? The shrewd Pandit cast his eyes about in all directions to save

himself from a similar disgrace at Calcutta. One may be sure he did not wait long before the light dawned on his mind. There was one person in all India that could convert his doubtful minority into a sure majority in the Subjects Committee as well as in the open Congress. Only Mr. Gandhi could do it. Not only from a political but what was even more important, from a personal point of view. For Mr. Gandhi alone held the respect and affection of the senior and the junior Nehru, and could make peace between them. The President elect of the Congress sent an urgent appeal to Mr. Gandhi to emerge from his long retirement to help him in the hour of his need. Mr. Gandhi, loyal as ever to his political allies and personal friends, hastened to Calcutta to attend the meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Congress on the 26th December, 1928.

We must pause here for a moment to recapitulate, however briefly, the immediate political antacedents of Mr. Gandhi in relation to the Congress activities. The last session in which Mr. Gandhi had taken any active part was the Gauhati session of 1926. But even then he had only contented himself with moving a Resolution on the murder of Swami Shraddhanand and another on the East African question. For the rest he had satisfied himself by lending his distinguished moral support to the zigzag course of the Swarajist tactics. He attended the Madras session of 1927. The Congress then adopted a Resolution on independence such as he had successfully fought with might and main for many years past. Yet he did not move his little finger to defeat it in the open Congress. The Government appointment of the All British Simon Committee rendered him powerless to do so. He did not emerge from his self-imposed retirement even to participate in the congenial task of effecting a political settlement between the different communities He is not reported to have attended any of the All Party Conferences or conventions that were held so frequently during the year of 1928. He joined, however, the chorus of applause that greeted the Nehru Report from all the half-baked politicals of India, and gave the country a decisive lead in electing the elder Pandit to the Presidential chair of the Calcutta Congress. And now, with all the accumulated reputation of a saint and an ascetic, an unselfish politician—who had not hesitated to retire from the field of his glorious victories when he found the country unwilling to follow him on his chosen path—and above all a no-party man,

unaffected by the passions and prejudices of party strife, solely inspired by the supreme desire to serve the country according to his best lights—Mr. Gandhi now descended, as it were, from the Heaven above to make his appearance at the Subjects Committee of the Congress.

His role was evidently cut out for him. He allied himself heart and soul with Pandit Motilal Nehru in destroying the obnoxious Delhi Resolution on the Nehru Report, and securing a more complimentary one instead. The first battle was as usual waged in the Working Committee of the Congress. Mr. Gandhi and the elder Nehru won the first round by a majority of six against five votes. The way having thus been clear Mr. Gandhi initiated the second stage of the struggle by moving his Resolution on Dominion Status in the following terms:—

"This Congress having considered the constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the Resolution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations and whilst adhering to the Resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress adopts the constitution drawn up by the Committee as agreat step in political advance specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

"Provided, however, that the Congress shall not be bound by the constitution if it is not accepted on or before the 31st December 1930 and provided further that in the event of non-acceptance by the British Parliament of the constitution by that date, the Congress will revive non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and every other aid to Government.

"The President is hereby authorised to send the text of this Resolution together with the copy of the said report to His Excellency the Viceroy for such action as he may be pleased to take.

"Nothing in the Resolution shall interfere with the propaganda for familiarising the people with the goal of independence in so far as it does not conflict with the prosecution of the campaign for the adoption of the said report".

In the course of the long and arduous discussion that raged on this Resolution Mr. Gandhi explained his re-appearance in the Subjects Committee as follows:-

"Dr. Pattabi asked me why I was coquetting with The Swaraj Party and was in lingering love with Pandit Motilal Nehru. It was not lingering love, but burning love for a dear comrade. Pandit Motilal Nehru wrote to me that I was instrumental in putting the crown of thorns on his head and might even have to see how many bruises had been created and even to share some of those bruises. I would be guilty of a breach of duty to the nation if after having pressed him to take the chair at this critical juncture in the history of the nation, I had not responded to his call and said: "Yes, I shall come on the date you fix, and I shall leave when you give me permission".

We will now set down some gems from the speech which Mr. Gandhi delivered in recommending his Resolution to the Committee.

First he attempted to destroy the Delhi Resolution with the following words:—

"I must take you in confidence and tell you that the President himself felt that the Delhi Resolution required rethinking and revision. Some of us putting our heads together came to the conclusion that the Delhi Resolution was a self-contradictory Resolution. So we cast about to find a middle path so that consistently with honesty and with the desire to accept the Nehru Report we should frame another Resolution. And this Resolution is the result".

He then pleaded for the whole-hearted and unqualified approval of the Nehru Report :—

"I suggest to you that the purpose of every Congressman should be to adopt the Nehru Report in the same spirit in which it was received by the whole of India at the time it was published. Let me recall to you the fact that at the time of its publication it was not only enthusistically received by the whole nation but it commanded, it extorted unstinted admiration of our critics, of our opponents and of outsiders who were disinterested. It is open to

you, if you choose so, to say that we shall not accept the Report, but I say it would be bad if we came to such a conclusion hastily ...... The All Parties Conference was brought into being at the instance of the Working Committee of the Congress and that being so he suggested that unless there were overwhelming reasons why they should not accept the Report, it must be accepted by them".

What was the real heart and kernel of the Nehru scheme? Mr. Gandhi answered "Dominion Status." He, therefore, insisted on the Committee's unstinted and unqualified approval of the fundamental principle of Dominion Status enshrined in the Nehru Report :—

"You cannot take this Report piecemeal. It is an organic whole...... *As Dr. Ansari has pointed out if you attack the central theme of the report you stab the heart itself and the central theme is what is known as Dominion Status.* I suggest to you that it will be a grievous blunder to pit Independence against Dominion Status and compare the two and suggest that Dominion Status carries humiliation with it and that Independence is something that is triumphant".

Mr. Gandhi thus exposed his deep-seated plan in all its ghastly nudity. He had come to the Congress at the behest of Pandit Motilal Nehru. The Pandit had not liked—nay more—had positively loathed the Delhi Resolution. Mr. Gandhi had heartily agreed with him. So he came to the Congress to plead for the whole-hearted acceptance of the Nehru Report—and therefore of the basic principle of Dominion Status which he deemed to be the very heart and soul of the great scheme. He sugared the bitter pill with nice words about the Madras Resolution on Independence. He also felt compelled to set down the limit of two years for the acceptance of this scheme by Government and to hold out the threat of the resumption of the campaign of non-violent non-co-operation including the non-payment of taxes, to make his Resolution acceptable to the rank and file of the Congress.

As soon as Mr. Gandhi had placed his Resolution before the Committee Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru arose to move his amendment virtually in terms of the Delhi Resolution. He denounced the objective of Dominion Status in the following scathing terms :—

"We must remember that the issue will arise as it arose in Ireland whether you should accept Dominion Status or not. What have other countries done ?

"I am not aware of any other country which under similar circumstances had adopted deliberately and consciously the Dominion ideal of government .... I think from whatever point of view you look at it, either from the standpoint of national honour or from the point of view of expediency, if you accept Dominion Status it would be an exceedingly wrong and foolish act. You know the incidents that have happened in the country. You know the death of Lala Lajpatrai, you know what has happened at Lahore, at Lucknow, and you know what insulting threat the Viceroy has issued.........If there was ever any necessity for not pulling down the flag (of independence) it should not be drawn down at the present moment when threats are in the air.

"The real thing in this world is that it is not so much a question of struggle between India and England. The real conflict is between the two sets of ideals and the question is which set of ideals are you going to keep for the country ? This is the conflict between Imperialism and all who are not for Imperialism, and you cannot for one moment think of Dominion Status so long as Great Britain has the Empire round her. By accepting Dominion Status you show to the world that you are prepared to accept the psychology of Imperialism".

And so the battle raged on. At the end of two days Mr. Gandhi, the senior Nehru and other losses!of the Congress discovered that even their combined strength would not succeed in carrying their precious Resolution through the Congress. Inspite of all the sophistications of Mr. Gandhi, the clause about the submission of the Resolution together with a copy of the Nehru Report to the Viceroy was resented by an overwhelming majority of the delegates. Then again the time limit of two years appeared too long to them to make the threatened campaign a serious reality. Pandit Nehru, therefore, pulled Mr. Gandhi out of his bed at midnight on the 27th December and settled a new Resolution at their secret conclave. Mr. Gandhi appeared before the Subject Committee on 28th December to substitute the new Resolution deleting all reference to the submission of the Resolution and the

report to the Viceroy and reducing the time limit to one year ending the 31st December 1929. And yet strangely enough Mr. Gandhi devoted the better part of his speech in support of the new Resolution, to an elaborate argument in favour of retaining the very clauses which were expunged from his Resolution. Evidently only a Mahatma could be permitted to defend the clauses which he was ostensibly seeking to delete.

Was Mr. Gandhi now convinced of the utter futility and national humiliation involved in submitting the Nehru Report to the Viceroy? Not at all. Listen to what Mr. Gandhi said to the Subjects Committee on this point:

"It is a piece of courtesy that we owe to ourselves to submit a copy of the report and Resolution to the Viceroy......

"The All-Parties Constitution is not to be submitted to the Simon Committee but certainly *it is a document to be considered by the Viceroy and by the Imperial Government......It has been drafted for the purpose. Otherwise it will be meaningless......*

"If you are going to do anything at all I again repeat that the Nehru Report has got to be considered by the British Parliament and by the Viceroy if it is to result in anything whatsoever. *The authors of the Nehru Report knew it. You know it and I know it.* It would be a sign of weakness not to recognise it. If the Viceroy is a worthy representative of his King and of his nation he will take not of this Resolution even though it does not contain the clause which I should have liked to have been inserted".

The cat was thus out of the bag. Mr. Gandhi gave up the whole game of the Congress. His words proved to the hilt that while the Congress had apparently and ostensibly boycott the Simon Commission it had from the beginning sought to co-operate with the constitutional machinations of Government by framing a constitution with the deliberate object of submitting it to the British Government. The much advertised and theatrical boycott was clearly proved from Mr. Gandhi's own lips to be a farce and a fraud. He virually pleaded for co-operation with Government constitution-mongering—though co-operation hy the back-door. And how could you submit any scheme for the kind consideration of the British Government if you had the unabashed effrontery to

demand complete separation from its Divine Empire? Therefore, bend your knees to the altar of the Empire and beg for Dominion Status!

Nor was Mr. Gandhi's mind brought round to the necessity of reducing the original time limit of two years to one. In the face of his own Resolution he still maintained that two years was the minimum period to prepare the nation for the grim struggle!

"I thought two years was short enough time to rally and organise our forces in order to give battle. If we must give battle to the Government, you will really require one year to create discipline in our ranks and have thousands of members on the Congress roll. Our Congress roll to-day is a bogus show...we want one year more for giving ourselves confidence and courage and for dedicating ourselves to the work of consolidation of communal unity".

Would Mr. Gandhi lead again the national campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes—as he did in 1920-21—if Government rejected, as all thought it would, the Congress Scheme with scorn? Mr. Gandhi replied:—"So many friends came and asked me if I voted for the Resolution whether I would take virtual control of national affairs. I confess I have not got the strength to do this single-handed, but I will if you come to terms with me and if you bear the yoke. The yoke will be much heavier than what it was in 1920......If you give the discipline I shall give as much as this frail body can give. You cannot expect from me anything unless these inexorable terms are granted by you at your own accord".

How did the leaders of the Independence Party view the new Resolution? The shrewd and supple Mr. S. Iyengar had already succumbed to the blandishments of Mr. Gandhi. And the Mahatma played a master stroke by securing the absence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during the discussion of his amended Resolution. Not content with this, Mr. Gandhi deliberately went out of his way to shower fulsome compliments on the young Nehru with the unconcealed intention of softening his obstinate opposition in view of future emergencies.

"I propose to take you into the secret......He (young Nehru) has become impatient to throw off the yoke. All the twenty-four hours of the day he simply broods over the grievances of his

country men. He is impatient to remove the grinding pauperism of the masses. He is impatient against capitalists who are exploiting the masses of the country, who rule over this country and exploit and bleed this country......I may tell you frankly that he is not in sympathy even with this Resolution which I seek to substitute for the original Resolution......He thinks that this Resolution itself falls far short of what he wants. He is a high-souled man. He does not want to create unnecessary bitterness of words. He seeks deliverance out of it by putting a self-imposed silence on himself".

No such compliments, however, were forthcoming for Mr. Subash Chandra Bose, who alone continued to fight. The President, however, gagged him. And Mr. Gandhi's amended Resolution was carried in the Subjects Committee by 118 votes against 45.

Mr. Gandhi's fight for the Empire reached its final stage during the year in the open session of the Congress on the 31st December, 1928. Sure of his victory he moved the Resolution as adopted by the Subjects Committee with a brief speech. Mr. Bose again moved his amendment in terms of the Delhi Resolution. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru supported him. The issue was a foregone conclusion. Mr. Bose's amendment was lost by 973 votes against 1,350. The Mahatma's Resolution was then separately put to vote and adopted amidst deafening shouts of "Bande Mataram" and "Mahatma Gandhiji-ki-jai."

The full significance of Mr. Gandhi's double plan of fighting for the British Empire and the Indian nation with the single weapon of a renewed civil disobedience movement will be discussed in the next chapter.

LXXI

THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS

MR. GANDHI did not board the train for Calcutta for nothing. He had a set objective in view, and he had also fixed upon the plan to reach it.

Let us travel back a few years to see what Mr. Gandhi had been building up and the means he had adopted for the purpose.

Mr. Gandhi faced a revolutionary situation for the first time in February 1919. He met it with the war-cry of civil disobedience. But no sooner had he fired the first shot than he hastened to beat a hasty retreat in restoring law and order for the British Government.

In 1920 Mr. Gandhi, true as ever to his particularist mode of approach to the political problem, concentrated all his attacks on the twin issues of the Punjab and the Khilafat. The question of Swaraj was only tacked on as an adventitious corollary at the Calcutta Congress in September 1920. He spoke then in fervent tones of the tremendous revolution he hoped to achieve in the hearts and minds of the millions of Indian people as also of the British Governors of the country. The nation was hypnotised by the high-sounding programme of non-violent, non-co-operation beginning with the resignation of titles at one end and ending in the non-payment of taxes at the other. And as Mr. Gandhi promised Swaraj within one year the nation hoped to hoist the flag of the Indian Republic on the banks of the Sabarmati on the 31st December 1921.

The whole nation, roused as never before in living minority, hastened to offer men (about 10 million members), money (£10,000,000), and munitions (thousands of spinning wheels) as it had never offered to any leader before. Yet the great Messiah went on postponing the day of a pitched battle with the Government from time to time. Finally, it was Government's panicky action in declaring all Congress Volunteer Organisations illegal

that precipitated, much against Mr. Gandhi's wish, a sharp encounter between the two parties. Most of the leaders were clapped in jail. About 30,000 volunteers, including hundreds of women, were quickly imprisoned. Millions upon millions of peasants and tenants all over the country were aching to plunge in an epoch-making no-tax and no-rent campaign. Thousands working on the British tea plantations, and in mills, mines and factories were seriously affected. Ahmedabad Congress voted unqualified dictatorial powers to Mr. Gandhi. Hopes for a victorious though peaceful revolution were raised to the highest pitch. All nerves were strained to a breaking point. Mr. Gandhi repaired to Bardoli to put the match to the train. But now he did worse than in 1919. A sporadic outburst in the north of India served him a a plausible excuse for shutting down this campaign in a microscopic sub-district in the west of India. He withdrew his ultimatum to the Viceroy almost before it was received at Delhi. The battle was lost without firing a single shot. The nation was engulfed in shame and despair as never before. And it was only Mr. Gandhi's timely arrest and imprisonment that saved him from drinking the bitter cup of humiliation to its very dregs.

Two points were thus made clear beyond the possibility of doubt. First, that Mr. Gandhi sought only a re-adjustment in the machinery of government within the frame-work of the British Empire. And secondly, his new-fangled movement of non-co-operation and civil disobedience was designed to cut small holes in the even surface of general co-operation and obedience so as to enable him to negotiate and bargain with the British Government.

Released from jail in the winter of 1924 Mr. Gandhi was faced at the very start with the emergence of the new Parliamentary Party. After engaging in a preliminary skirmish with the Swarajist forces in June 1924, and pocketing his first doubts and defeats, he finally decided to patch up an alliance with the Swaraj Party. After presiding at Belgaum Congress he ostensibly retired from the field of politics, not only to busy himself with the spinning programme but to build up the counter-revolutionary front with the help of all the reactionary and

the conservative forces in the country. He presided over the Native States Peoples' Conference with the set purpose of squelching even its normal political activities and of securing the co-operation of its votaries with their oppressive rulers in prosecuting the khaddar programme. He addressed direct appeals to the Rajahs and Nabobs, their ministers, and hirelings, to co-operate with him in spreading the gospel of the spinning wheel. In the parliamentary field, not content with allying himself with the Swarajists, Mr. Gandhi made a bold bid for co-operation with the older constitutionalist, Liberal and Capitalist parties. And the champion of undiluted non-co-operation fell so low as to humbly seek the co-operation of the British Government and pseudo-governmental bodies in furtherance of the constructive programme so dear to his heart.

While he thus allied himself with the Rajahs and landlords, the capitalists and the "classes"—the very same that he had denounced in the course of his trial for squeezing the life-blood of the masses—he turned a deaf-ear to all the pathetic and appeals of the millions of the suppressed and down-trodden agricultural and industrial workers. If the Kisans of the United Provinces appealed to him against the frightful exactions of their blood-sucking masters, Mr. Gandhi sternly referred them to the arbitration of Pandit Motilal Nehru and his Congress Committees which were heavily infected with the influence of landlords. Industrial strikes were breaking out continuously all over the country, in factories, mines and railways. If the strikers appealed to Mr. Gandhi he laid down impossible conditions before giving his mighty patronage to their struggle. And when they were compelled tofight under their own working-class leadership, neither Mr. Gandhi nor the professed labourite Swarajist Party moved even a little finger to help them.

Meanwhile the world was moving apace. While Mr. Gandhi played his pseudo revolutionary stunts in India, the Irish revolutionaries had engaged in a life and death struggle for destroying the entire frame-work of British Government in their little country, and had finally wrenched even a Free State Constitution from the unwilling hands of Lloyd George, Churchill and Company. And still the Irish Republicans continued to wage an

uncompromising civil war even against their kith and kin who had been hypnotised by the charms of the new British-made constitution. While Mr. Gandhi was riding the hobby-horse of the spinning-wheel throughout the country, intelligent people were quietly learning and pondering over the lesson of the Irish struggle. Hardly had the echoes of the Irish struggle died down then din and turmoil of the Chinese Revolution served to awaken the intelligence of the rising youth in India. Four-hundred and fifty millions people of China were at last waking up from the sleep of ages. The Chinese Republic had been establised in 1911. Yet the British-American and Japanese Imperialists had continued their ravages and depredations through their commercial concessions and military colonies spread far and wide throughout the land. But now the Kuo-min-tang Party founded by Sun-yat Sen had been co-operating for some years with the representatives of the Russian Soviet Government to awaken and organise hundreds of millions of workers and peasants of China. At the beginning of 1927 their combined onslaught compelled the proud Britishers to evacuate the concession in Hankow. More withdrawals followed in quick succession. The news from China was devoured with a consuming appetite by the Indian intelligentsia, and people asked with wonder and amazement why they could not secure the expulsion of a single Britisher out of the country while Ireland and China had worked such marvels during the period of Mr. Gandhi's undisputed leadership in their country.

The rising tide of revolutionary fervour received a strange impetus from the appointment of the All-British Simon Commission. Liberals and Swarajists, the masters and masses joined hand in hand and marched shoulder to shoulder in monster processions to inaugurate the new boycott movement. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru soon returned to India from his European tour. He had learned something of modern socialism and of the new technique of mass revolution from London, Berlin and Moscow. And he came to the Madras Congress of 1927 fully determined to inaugurate a new campaign against the entrenched forces of British Imperialism in India.

His preliminary success was very promising, indeed. He got the Congress to line up with the new League against Imperialism that

had been started in Europe. It was undoubtedly at his instance that forceful Resolutions were adopted greeting the Chinese revolution and denouncing the war-mongering designs of the big Imperialist powers. He achieved a glowing success by securing the support of the Congress for the goal of complete independence. Not content with this he presided at the first Republican Congress and exorted his audience to create a republican mentality among the vast masses of the people.

As we have mentioned before Mr. Gandhi tactfully bowed under the unexpected storm. But he diplomatically colluded with the old Bosses of the Congress in creating the All-Parties Conference in the full assurance that the result of its labours would create a more favourable opportunity for him to return to the scene of his labours.

Nor did young Nehru's Party take much time to expound the full implications of the novel creed of independence. As Mr. Gandhi had explained at the Congress of 1920 the creed of Swaraj then set out in the Congress of Constitution was deliberately left ambiguous so as to be interpreted as self-government inside or outside the Empire. The goal of independence, therefore, pledged the Congress to work for a free Constitution outside the tentacles of British Imperialism. To set all controversy at rest the new party set out to interpret independence as complete severance from Great Britain. And if freedom was not to be sought under the hegemony of the British nation, obviously the Indian people were to be invested with supreme and unqualified sovereignty in their own land. The seat of power was thus sought to be shifted from the small apex at the top to the broad base of the millions at the bottom. Nay more, in strict conformity with the lesson of the Irish Revolution the Party of Independence logically pledged itself to the "reconstruction of Indian society on a basis of social and economic equality." The corollary was obvious. The land was to be the property, not of a handful of Rajahs and Nabobs, nor of the British planters or Indian landlords, but of the millions toiling on the land. All means of production, distribution, and exchange—the mines and factories, banks and railways—were to belong, not to the few Indian and British private individuals or companies but to

a national government, broad-based on the votes of the teeming millions.

The issue, therefore, between Independence and Dominion Status did not remain a mere matter of political theory or philosophical speculation. A Dominion Constitution could not be said to be a halting stage on the road to Independence. The two roads were fundamentally different. Those who were in favour of the existing social and economic order of the private ownership of lands, factories and banks, instinctively sought the protection of the British Crown to perpetuate and to intensify the existing exploitation of the army of toilers. Those on the other hand who sought to emancipate these toilers and invest them with the rights of unquestioned sovereignty insisted on complete cleavage from the oppressive yoke of a foreign nation to enable them to reverse the entire social order in the interests of the exploited and the oppressed masses. The fundamental division between the two sides was sharply accentuated by Mr. Nimbkar when he moved an amendment at the Calcutta Congress denouncing the Nehru Report as totally unsatisfactory and unacceptable for the following principal reasons :—

"(1) That it allows the bourgeoisie to compromise with British Imperialism by establishing the so-called Dominion Status which involves safeguards of the vested interests, land-owning, feudal and capitalist and sacrifice of the interest of the masses.

(2) That by recognising the titles of the Princes it proposes to perpetuate a tyrannical system of Government entailing unchecked exploitation of the masses which exists in the native states.

(3) That it safeguards and acquiesces in the exploitation of human and material resources of India by foreign capital.

(4) That it guarantees and allows enjoyment of all titles to private and personal property acquired by questionable means which perpetuates exploitation of the masses.

(5) That it guarantees payment of all foreign state debt,

(6) That it proposes to place armed forces of the country under the control of a committee which will at first consist partly of British officers thus depriving the people of their inherent right of self-defence.

(7) That it proposes to give executive powers and power of veto to the Governor General and the Governor nominated by the King, thus depriving the Indian people of their sovereign rights.

"This Congress, therefore, declares that its aim is the attainment of complete national independence based on political, economic and social equality entirely free from Imperialism".

All this was indeed gall and wormwood to the great Mahatma. He had been indeed pleased to strut about on the political stage as a great revolutionary when he could bring millions to their knees by pinning their faith to the ambiguous slogans of "Ramraj" and "Dharmaraj". But the times had changed. A new party seriously pledged to the undisputed sovereignty of the Indian Republic had arisen in the land. Nor was it altogether devoid of influence. It had scored in initial success at Madras. At the Delhi meeting of the A. I. C. C. in November 1928 it had driven a coach and four even through the Nehru Report and secured a majority for its Resolution for complete severance from Great Britain. Mr. Gandhi saw his whole life work, in the cause of existing order, threatened by this new party of youngsters. Mr. Nimbkar could be denounced as a Communist. Mr. S. Iyenger could be bought over for an ambiguous formula. But Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru meant what he said. How could Mr. Gandhi then negotiate any further with the Viceroy—and perhaps even with the British Prime Minister—for ambiguous rights and petty concessions if the young Nehru carried the Congress with him—as he had carried it up till now—in demanding complete separation from the British Empire and the unequivocable sovereignty of the Indian people? Again, how could Mr. Gandhi continue to appeal to the princes and princelings, to the landlords and Talukdars—as he had done for the last four years—to help him with khaddar programme, in lieu of his implicit acceptance of their inalienable rights over the lands and persons of their subjects and tenants, if Mr. J. Nehru were

to be allowed to commit the Congress to the Socialist ideal of the complete destruction of their vested interests? Again, how could Mr. Gandhi face the big industrialists and multi-millionaires who had implicitly recognised in him a loyal champion of their class interests if the Congress were allowed to dethrone them in favour of the millions slaving in their factories and workshops?

The issue was clear. The whole of Mr. Gandhi's life-work was now in the balance. He had always worked for the stabilisation and even strengthening of the established system of Government, whether in India or South Africa. The Boer War found him in the service of the Union Jack. If the Zulus rebelled against the monstrous oppression of the Whites, he had no hesitation in placing himself and his following at the disposal of the tyrannical Government. Nor did his doctrine of non-violence prevent Mr. Gandhi from attempting to organise a fighting force for the British Government during the Great War. And had he not testified to his undimmed faith "in the inherent superiority of the British Constitution to all others at present in vogue," in the very letter which he addressed to the Viceroy (22nd June. 1920) to give him an ultimatum regarding the inauguration of the Non-co-operation Movement? It was indeed no fault of Mr. Gandhi that he found himself locked up in jail in 1922 instead of basking in the sunshine of the Viceregal palace. His imprisonment, however, had not soured his spirits nor bred any hatred against the British Constitution. The four years of counter-revolutionary effort in the cause of the spinning wheel had. if at all, only deepened and strengthened his faith in his cherished connection with the British Crown. In proportion as the earth appeared to rock under his feet, and the air grew hotter around him, he seemed to cling more desperately than ever before to the British Empire as the very sheet-anchor of internal peace and external stability. He had indeed indulged in wild words about the destruction of the Satanic System of government, to mask the very essence of imperialism enthroned in his heart. But now he stood aghast as he heard the clarion call of the new party which appeared determined to dig out British Imperialism by its very roots from the soil of India. He was even more horrified at the dismal prospect of all the big propertied classes—the Rajahs and the landlords, the mill owners and the millionaires—

the very bulwarks of his cherished system of society—now threatened with common extinction.

If Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru carried the day at the Calcutta Congress, Mr. Gandhi would be condemned to permanent retirement from the national assembly. Othello's occupation would be gone for ever. The rock of ages would be cleft for him. There would be no more room for pious equivocations and pseudo-revolutionary slogans. Religious formulas would be dethroned in favour of the iron realities of the situation. Above all there would be no room left for high-sounding ultimatums intended to lead up to humiliating pacts and slavish bargains. "Now or never", thought Mr. Gandhi and hastened to Calcutta—in the service not only of Imperialistic robbery but also of feudal oppression, landlords, exactions and capitalists' exploitation of the millions of India.

There was another danger—perhaps a more serious one. For the new theory of freedom implicitly carried within itself the elements of a really revolutionary programme of mass organisation and mass action. If the new party was really determined to shift the centre of sovereignty from the narrow apex of the British Crown to the millions of India they could not but devise a new programme shifting the centre of responsibility and initiative from the middle and lower middle classes to the masses toiling in the fields, factories, and workshops. Mr. Gandhi's pacifist programme of fake non-co-operation and real obedience was well calculated to hypnotise the small peasants, merchants, and shop-keepers. But if the millions were to engage in a desperate and uncompromising struggle, not only to uproot foreign domination, but also Indian exploitation—in fact to win power and a place in the sun, not for the classes above, but for themselves, they were undoubtedly expected to act as the spear-head of the new movement. The new programme could thus take only two forms The millions of peasants and tenants could engage in a no-tax and no-rent campaign. The workers in the factories and workshop, the mines and plantations could be led in a general strike against the foreign and the Indian exploiters. And the nature of the future struggle would be essentially determined by the exigencies of the situation.

The new programme did not remain a matter of mere theoretical speculation. It had already been foreshadowed by the march of dynamic events in the year 1928. The first general strike had broken out in the textile mills of Bombay during the year and had been carried on for an uninterrupted period of nearly six months in face of the cruel apathy of the Congress party and the bloody terrorism of Government by the unparalleled militancy and heroic valour of the workers themselves. They had been compelled by the combined attacks of mill-owners and Government to organise their own citizen army for self-defence. What was more, the determined resistance of the strikers had compelled their bosses and Government alike to negotiate with them and to appoint a committee for inquiring into their legitimate grievances. The strike was concluded in October. But a big precedent had been established and a general strike not only in one city but all over the country had now been perceptibly brought within the range of practical politics as an effective weapon of the workers' fight for freedom.

The peasants of Burma again had marked in indelible words the lines of a real land struggle against the Government. It had all begun with a no-tax campaign against the monsterous exactions of government. But the severity of the military onslaught had compelled the militant peasants to engage in a desperate guerrila warfare. It rapidly spread over a very large area in this far-eastern Province and was carried on with unabated vigour in the marshes and forests of the rice-growing districts.

A similar wave of peasant discontent swept over the whole country during this year of 1928. Would not the red spark from Burma ignite the whole magazine throughout the land? The thrice-oppressed tenants had been kept down all these years by the duplicity of the Congress leaders. But the periodical revisions of revenue settlement carried out under orders from Government served to rouse the peasantry in the whole area of Gujarat as in many other Provinces. With Mr. Gandhi's consent Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel went down to Bardoli to localise the inevitable conflict in a small area with the obvious though implicit intention of preventing any general or sporadic outbursts in a wider area. The so-called victory, therefore, achieved in Bardoli served only to mask the general defeat of the peasantry all over the country.

No wonder then that Swami Kumaranand denounced the Bardoli campaign in the Subjects Committee of the Calcutta Congress as a dismal failure.

Luckily, for Mr. Gandhi, these events were already being seen through refracted light when he arrived on the scene. The puny success of Bardoli was exaggerated as an epoch-making victory. The epic stuggle of the Bombay workers was, no doubt, viewed in some quarters in the proper perspective. But the vast majority of the khaddar-befogged delegates regarded it as a comparatively minor incident of doubtful value. For, had not the militant strikers acted in contravention of the high principle of non-violence by defending themselves with their hands and sticks against the murderous assaults of the police and the military? And had not even leftist leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Subhash Bose contented themselves by paying lip service to the strikers' cause without collecting a penny for their relief? The subject, indeed, deserved a Congress Resolution. But no more. The Burma rebellion—the most far-reaching event of all—was only mentioned in whispers by the back-benchers. It was, indeed, a colossal struggle. But it was an armed uprising. It embodied a complete reversal of the Congress policy of pacificism. It was, therefore, viewed more as a red warning signal than as an example for imitation.

Mr. Gandhi was pleased to note that his life principle of non-violence remained intact. May be there were some who accepted it as a matter of tactics. But even this minority of croakers gladly submitted to its visible embodiment—the milk-white livery of khaddar. So far so good. With his rare ingenuity Mr. Gandhi could build nearly anything on these immutable foundations.

Now then for the real job.

The job was two-fold. First, to reinstate Dominion Status under the cover of the Nehru Report in place of the dangerous doctrine of complete independence and absolute severance from the British Empire. Secondly, to win away the impressionable minds of the rank and file from the dangerous precedence set up by outside countries such as Ireland and China, and by the Bombay strikers, Bengal revolutionaries, and Burma rebels nearer at home. Each one of these tasks had to be performed in the

face of immense odds. Both combined might well appear impossible of achievement to any other leader, however clever and distinguished he might be. Had not, however, Shri Rama successfully lifted and broken to bite the Divine bow which bigger and mightier kings could not move by a single inch ? Mr. Gandhi might well succeed where others would fail.

To reinstate Dominion Status in December 1928 after the A. I. C. C. had definitely committed the Congress to complete severance from the British Empire was indeed a tough job. Even Mr. Gandhi realised that he could not succeed on a straight issue between Dominion Status and Independence. If the question would be placed before the Congress with incisive clearness the rank and file would have no hesitation in preferring the charter of freedom to a bond of slavery. Mr. Gandhi was thus put to the unenviable necessity of clouding the entire issue with irrelevant excrescences. With consummate adroitness he tacked on to his main Resolution additional clauses setting out a two years' ultimatum to Government and threatening it with the resumption of a campaign of non-co-operation if Government did not concede the Nehru Constitution. It was thus by raising the banner of a new campaign against Government that even Mr. Gandhi hoped to win over Congress to his reactionary gospel of Dominion Status.

The very presentation of such a Resolution served to create an unexpected panic in the ranks of the large majority of the delegates who had gathered at Calcutta to swear by complete independence. A definite ultimatum, ending in a new campaign, had not been even contemplated at the A. I. C. C. meetings during the year. The majority frankly did not like the bitter pill of slavery to the Empire. But then, had not Mr. Gandhi told them that the Nehru Report itself constituted the nation's charter of independence ? True, Messrs. Nehru and Bose could be trusted to carry on a whirlwind propaganda for unqualified independence. But who else but Mr. Gandhi could lead a peaceful rebellion against Government ? Had not leaders of all political parties—even including the ultra-leftists and radicals—begged of him again and again during the last four years to emerge from his self-imposed retirement to lead a mass campaign against the strengthening forces of

Government ? All the glories and triumphs of Mr. Gandhi's unprecedented campaign of 1920-21 flashed on men's memories with new refulgence. The megalomaniac of the last four years appeared suddenly enveloped with a shining halo of a great crusader. The Bardoli debacle and the ignominious surrender were, for the moment, forgotton. Hadn't he compelled even the astute Lord Reading to open negotiations with him on the eve of the Ahmedabad Congress ? Hadn't he, above all, brought the country within an ace of success ?

Dazed by the golden dream of a holy war, most of the delegates easily lost their footing on the solid ground of political principle. Mr. Gandhi made it perfectly clear, that if he was to lead the new campaign he would impose his terms for willing acceptance. Allegiance to Dominion Status—to the foreign British Empire—was the sovereign price he demanded for assuming leadership of the new war. "Let us pay it," thought the delegates, "but let us make ourselves doubly sure by committing the Mahatma unreservedly to the leadership of the new campaign." The time limit of two years, viewed in this light, appeared too visionary and impracticable. Anything might happen within such a long period. To leave no loophole to the ingenious ascetic from the sure prospect of resuming his interrupted struggle, the delegates virtually compelled Mr. Gandhi to reduce the time limit to one year. He agreed to it though under strong protest. Anyhow his purpose was served. A large majority of the delegates swallowed the bait of Dominion Status with the rich sauce of civil disobedience.

The self-same Resolution served Mr. Gandhi as an unerring instrument for accomplishing his second job. The mind of Congressmen and the nation had been left free too long to ponder over the lessons of foreign revolutions and mass uprisings at home. They had thus learned to hanker vaguely for a militant programme which might speedily create a new heaven and a new earth for them. But no sooner had the Mahatma awakened the the hope of a new campaign, all attention was necessarily rivertted on it as the panacea of all ills. No armed uprisings—as in Ireland, China, or Burma. No mischievous or militant strikes—as in Bombay and elsewhere. No resort to violence, physical or social, mental or moral, even in self-defence against the brutal

assaults of the enemy. No no-rent campaigns against the landlords or the princes, the formidable pillars of the venerable social order of India. As a set-off against these accursed revolutionary methods, Mr. Gandhi unfolded his pompous programme of non-co-operation, civil disobedience, and non-payment of Government taxes. But the use of these formidable weapons was to be regulated by the sovereign principle of non-violence. Break unmoral or immoral laws by all means. Likewise lead masses of peasants in formidable no-tax campaigns. But do it all under such conditions and within such restricted limits as to ensure the strictest observance of non-violence in thought, word and deed. Shed no blood, and break no bones except your own. Above all co-operate with Government in preserving law and order—for the preservation of the vested interests and the British Empire.

The deeper implications of the new war as contemplated by Mr. Gandhi were neither questioned nor discussed by the delegates. All parties in the Congress applauded the Mahatma with overwhelming unanimity for pledging himself to the new campaign. Once again the Congress was successfully hoodwinked. A limited campaign designed with the set purpose of wringing petty concessions and of nipping all revolutionary forces in the bud was foolishly hailed by the extremists and the moderates alike as a holy war to wrest freedom from a formidable Empire.

Mr. Gandhi's triumph was complete. He had killed two birds with one stone. The representatives of three-hundred and fifty millions had been cleverly pacified with the prospect of being tied down to the iron chains of an Empire of about fifty million foreigners. The spell of a thrice condemned war-cry was successfully woven on the empty heads of the khaddar-clad politicians. In fact, a reactionary objective and a counter revolutionary method were successfully reinstated on the pedestal of the Congress. The delegates were virtually led back by the nose to the position that obtained in September 1920. The intervening period of eight years was well nigh forgotten. High hopes of a new battle and a new victory were kindled in the hearts of men. Luckily, the Congress had left Mr. Gandhi the whole year of 1929 to fashion the new weapon and to bargain with Government. To the new evolutions of Mr. Gandhi and the dynamic events of 1929 we will now turn.

LXXII

NEGOTIATION.

EVENTS now marched very rapidly towards the inevitable climax. Three main lines of development were clearly visible. Revolution raised its head more openly and defiantly not only against the foreign government but also against the inhuman exploitation of the vast masses. Government on the other hand met the new offensive with a new spurt of brutal terrorism and wholesale persecution such as had not been witnessed since 1920-21. And thirdly, while thousands of Burmans were being made the targets of British bullets, and a veritable reign of terror was sweeping over the length and breadth of India, the lotus-eaters of the Congress continued to sit in parleys with the British Viceroy over the question of the grant of Dominion Status and equal partnership within the Empire !!!

On the 16th of December, 1928, Mr. I. P. Saunders, a British Police Officer, was shot dead in open day-light at Lahore by a gang of revolutionaries. According to the statement of an approver made in the course of the legal proceedings instituted many months afterwards, this officer was punished under the impression that he had been implicated in leading a brutal assault on the great Nationalist leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, who had subsequently succumbed to the injuries. Wholesale arrests were made in Lahore in connection with the shooting. Dr. Ansari and a number of other prominent leaders issued a statement on 7th January, 1929, protesting in strong terms against wholesale and indiscriminate "arrests and torture and tyranny" alleged to have been perpetrated on young students.

On the 28th January, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, opened the Winter session of the Legislative Assembly with an elaborate review of the Indian situation. After referring to the "many important meetings held at the close of the last year" and to the "actions taken and words used in the heat by controversy, or under the stress of a critical occasion," he said:—

"In a situation, therefore, that must call essentially for qualities of confidence on both sides and for free exchange of opinion on terms honourable to all, I see very clearly that nothing but harm can flow from a treaty, that unless a particular condition is fulfilled, which I believe to be mechanically impossible of fulfilment from the outset, an attempt will be made to plunge the country into all the possible chaos of a civil disobedience. It is quite certain that no discussions of any kind can promise the least hope of success when either party to them broaches the task in the spirit of hostility and suspicion from which such an ultimatum springs ....

"I can hardly hope that any words of mine may suffice to disperse the black cloud of unwarranted mistrust that has enshrouded so much of Indian political thought, but I tell this assembly again and through them India that the Declaration of 1917 stands and will stand for all time as the solemn pledge of the British people to do all that can be done by one people to assist another to attain full national political stature and that the pledge so given will never be dishonoured, and that as actions are commonly held more powerful than words, I will add that I should not be standing before you here to-day as Governor-General if I believed that the British people had withdrawn their hand from that solemn covenant".

Thus was the Calcutta Resolution of the Congress virtually denounced, though in very diplomatic language, by the representative of the British Crown in India. This speech, however, left the Congress President quite unperturbed. Commenting on the Viceroy's speech he said (29th January) :—"The door of negotiation is not closed. There is yet ample time for a free exchange of opinion on terms honourable to all provided the will for such free exchange is there".

On February 3, the people of Bombay were seriously disturbed by a rumour that children were being kidnapped by Pathans and taken to Baroda to be sacrificed on the foundation of a bridge that was being built there. The Hindu workers misguided by such rumours began to attack the Pathans who were speedily reinforced by a large section of the Mohammedans. Serious riots thus broke out in Bombay and continued till the 12th February resulting in

137 killed and 783 injured according to the official report. The so-called communal riot, however, really originated with a labour trouble. Mr. Crerar, the Government Home Member, analysed the situation in the following words:—

"As the House is aware, the industrial labouring population in Bombay has for some time been in a state of great unsettlement.... The events that led up to the present outbreak may be said to have started with the strikes that broke out on December 7th (1928) under the Communist leadership at the oil companies' installations. Oil companies engaged Pathan workmen in place of the strikers (mostly Hindus). Several disturbances arose in consequence between the strikers and the Pathans. On January 18, apparently as the result of a general ill-feeling between the Pathans and the mill-hands, three Pathan watchmen of New China Mills were murdered by the mill-hands".

To see these events in the proper perspective it is necessary to remember that all these oil companies are mostly British concerns and managed by British agents. It was these Britishers that deliberately imported Pathan workmen as scabs to break the resistance of their striking workmen. The responsibility, therefore, of the initial labour trouble and the consequent ghastly riots must be inevitably laid at the door of the British oil magnates and the British Government.

On the 4th February the Government re-introduced the Public Safety Bill which had been defeated by one vote during the last session. Explaining the reasons for bringing the measure, the Home Member said: "The principle underlying the Bill was to invest the Government with the power to check the mischievous activities of persons (real or supposed Communists) coming from outside India...Industrial unrest in the country was exploited by (working on) illiterate and ignorant industrial workers especially in Bombay and Calcutta. Further, sedulous attempts were being made to bring the youth movement in the country within the orbit of communism." He then referred to the grave disorders consisting of lightning strikes, murderous assaults, and other deplorable incidents that had taken place in the last few months in the industrial areas of Bombay and Calcutta.

The debate on the Bill was long and arduous. Dewan Chamanlal retorted to the Home Member:—"The Bill was introduced last session but was not passed. Four months have since passed but nothing like destruction of society has come to pass!" Pandit Motilal Nehru characterised the Bill as a direct attack against Indian Nationalism and the Indian National Congress. He called the measure the Slavery of India Bill or the Safety of Bureaucracy Bill. The second reading of the Bill was passed by a majority of votes. On the 2nd of April, however, the President, Mr. Patel, made a statement asking Government either to postpone the Bill pending the Meerut trial, or if they attached greater importance to passing this Bill at this juncture. to withdraw the Meerut Case and then proceed further with the Bill. For he contended that the fundamental basis of the Bill was virtually identical with the case preferred against the 31 accused. As Government refused to comply with either of these conditions the President finally ruled the Bill out of order (11th April.) Government then contented themselves by issuing an Ordinance in terms of the Public Safety Bill.

The Trades Dispute Bill was another formidable weapon devised by the Government to stem the tide of the working class movement in India. This Bill "to make provision for investigation and settlement of trade disputes" consisted of three parts. "The first relates to the establishment of tribunals for investigation and settlement of trade disputes," explained the Government representative in the Assembly (11th February.) "The second part made it a penal offence for the workers employed on monthly wages in public utility services to strike without previous notice, and also provided heavier penalties for persons abetting such offence... ... The last part related to illegal strikes and lock-outs. They are applicable only in case of strikes and lock-outs which satisfy two conditions. In the first place a strike or lock out must have other objects than mere furtherance of trade dispute within the industry to which the strikes or employers belonged, and in the second place a strike or lock-out must be designed to coerce the Government either directly or indirectly, or inflict hardship on the community. If these conditions were satisfied a strike or lock-out must be illegal." The Bill was referred to the Select Committee without a division.

Let us now turn for a moment to the activities of the Congress. The Working Committee of the Congress met on the 3rd and 4th February at Delhi—within only a few days of the Viceroy's speech in the Assembly. Yet the wiseacres of the Working Committee were not moved by the taunts and insults heaped upon them to adopt any Resolution on the subject with a view to give a lead to the country. They wasted a lot of time instead in deliberating on minor matters and on the precious scheme submitted by Mr. Gandhi for the boycott of all foreign cloth. The Resolutions of the Committee proved conclusively—if any such proof were indeed necessary—that the minds of the Congress bosses had grown so thoroughly impervious to the burning question of freedom or slavery for the land, and so little concentrated even on the pompous Resolution they had sponsored at the Calcutta Congress that they were still content, as of old, to plough the lands of their pet constructive programme. Mr. Gandhi's scheme of boycott was only a euphemism for an intensive campaign for spreading the gospel of the spinning wheel. The Committee only mildly approved of Mr. Gandhi's scheme and left the details to be worked out later.

More elaborate and detailed Resolutions not only with regard to the boycott of foreign cloth but also in relation to the propaganda in favour of total prohibition of intoxicating drugs and drink and—curiously enough—the promotion of wrestling matches, drill, lathi play, and other national sports were adopted by the Working Committee that met again at Delhi from February 17 to to 19. But obviously the centre of gravity had already shifted elsewhere. The Congress leaders had now got obviously more busy trying to create a basis of discussion with the Viceroy than preparing the nation for a determined struggle. The initiation of these pourparlers was revealed to the public when the President, Mr. Patel, gave a tea party on the 19th February in honour of the Viceroy, and invited Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other party leaders. Strict secrecy was observed regarding the informal talks between these big folk. But it was understood that the conversations referred to the political issues raised by the Calcutta Congress and the communal riots in Bombay.

On March 4, Mr. Gandhi was arrested in Calcutta with several others for setting fire to a collection of foreign cloth in disobedience

of an order issued by the local Commissioner of Police. On resuming the leadership of the National Congress he had deemed it necessary to reinforce the boycott of foreign cloth by repeating the trice-exploded stunt of making theatrical bonfires of foreign cottons, woollens and silks. These arrests gave a temporary impetus to the movement of the boycott of foreign cloth. How seriously the Government viewed the whole episode may be judged from the fact that Mr. Gandhi was released within a few days—to enable him to extend his tour to Burma—and was subsequently fined the magnificent sum of rupee one!

On April 8, the business in the Legislative Assembly was brought to a dramatic conclusion by the throwing of 2 bombs from the Strangers' Gallery followed by 2 revolver shots. The incident occurred just after the Trades Dispute Bill had been passed and when the President was about to rise to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill, red pamphlets headed "Hindustan Socialist Republican Army" were thrown along with the bombs. Two young men—then unknown to fame — Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt—were arrested immediately afterwards in connection with the incident.

Both these revolutionaries were sentenced to transporation for life at a trial held in Delhi on the 12th June 1929.

How far the Congress Leaders were awakened to the great issue of the revolution by the bomb explosion in the Assembly could be easily gauged from the Resolutions of the All India Congress Committee which met in Bombay on May 24th—25th. The main Resolution on the political situation and organisation in the country was moved by Mr. Gandhi in following terms :

"In view of the campaign of repression which British Government is carrying on all over the country, as evidenced by the conviction of Mr. Sambamurti, a member of the Working Committee, and many other national workers, the wholesale arrests and barbarous treatment of the members of the All India Congress Committee and the Labour leaders and workers now awaiting trial at Meerut, the unwarranted house-searches, the wanton confiscation of Pandit Sunderlal's "History of British Rule"........

"The All India Congress Committee is of opinion that the nation should be prepared for efficient resistance to such methods and as it is clear that no nation-wide resistance is possible unless the whole Congress organisation is reconstructed on a satisfactory basis (the resolution then went on to prescribe the minimum numbers of members each Congress unit from a village to Province was required to enrol by the end of August 1929.)

"No Provincial organisation will be recognised by the Committee that does not satisfy the foregoing test by the 31st August 1929.

It will be open to the Working Committee to disaffiliate any organisation that does not carry out the instructions issued, from time to time, by the All India Congress Committee or the Working Committee".

Mr. Gandhi devoted the better part of his oratory to an elaborate justification of the drastic penal clause tacked on to the main Resolution. Not a word was said, however, or heard either about the bomb explosion in the Assembly or about the tremendous strikes that were raging all over the country. On the contrary, significant attention was paid to the announcement made by the Governor-General in regard to the extension of the life of the Assembly and the indefinite postponement of general elections in the country. After Pandit Motilal Nehru had made a statement from the chair the A. I. C. C. adopted a Resolution authorising the Working Committee to adopt such measures as it might consider fit in the interests of the country as regards the action to be taken by the members of the Congress party in the Assembly and Provincial Councils.

In pursuance of this Resolution the President issued a statement on June 10th, in the course of which he said:

"The Congress Resolution demanding abstentation from Legislatures is not an isolated move; it is in pursuance of the Calcutta and Mardras Resolution on independence and non-co-operation from 1930 and a corollary to Gandhi's resolution for reorganising the Congress. The Government communique is intended to check normal developments and is the first step of a scheme to defeat the Congress. But the worst that can happen will prove the

best for the Congress, bringing the inevitable conflict nearer. Now that things have reached a crisis and time for action has arrived, all available forces have to be directed to the main goal for which Councils are of no use".

Thus the Congress policy was left beautifully vague so as to adopt it to future emergencies. Meanwhile a general election in England had resulted in the formation of the Labour Government under the leadership of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. And as the situation in India had been brought to dangerous pitch by the Punjab revolutionaries on the one hand and the formidable strike activities of organised labourers in industrial areas on the other, Lord Irwin left India on June 29th to consult the Labour Ministers in London as to the best method of pacifying the country while conceding nothing.

The A. I. C. C. met in Lucknow on September 28th. How deeply the whole country had been stirred to its very depths by the deaths of the two martyrs, Jatin and Rev. Wizaya, was shown at the meeting of this Committee when Pandit Motilal Nehru opened the proceedings by moving the following Resolution from the Chair:

"The A. I. C. C. place on record its deep admiration for the great courage and steadfastedness underlying the sacrifices of the late Jatindra Nath Das and Rev. Wizaya in having given up lives for ideals dearly cherished by them." The Committee, however, sought to allay the growing revolutionary discontent in the country by advising those who had imposed the sacrifice on themselves to end their hunger-strike specially in view of the self-immolation of the two martyrs and the fact that the Government had at the eleventh hour yielded to most of the demands of the hunger-strikers.

The meeting of the A. I. C. C. was, however, really convened to elect a President for the Lahore Congress. In the ordinary course Mr. Gandhi should have been elected the President as ten Provincial Committees including the Punjab had voted for him, three had voted for Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru each, and one for Mr. N. C. Kelkar. But even before the Reception Committee of the Lahore Congress formally elected Mr. Gandhi to the Chair, he had decided to refuse the honour in favour of Pandit

Jawaharlal Nehru. He stated his reason in "Young India" on August 1st as follows: "I know that I am not keeping pace with the march of events. There is a hiatus between the rising generation and me." At Lucknow again he was repeatedly pressed in informal conversations and in the Committee meeting to accept the high honour conferred upon him by the country. As usual, however, he remained perfectly adamant. He however, explained that he was not going to run away from the coming battle on January 1st, 1930, and was willing to extend every help in formulating the programme and scheme for the Congress work. The proposal to elect Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel to the Chair also fell through as he declined the honour with thanks. Finally, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's name was duly proposed and seconded and he was declared elected *nem con* amidst loud cheers.

Then the Viceroy returned to India by the end of October and hastened to issue his bombastic statement (October 31st) in which he outlined his Government's proposal to call the Round Table Conference and discoursed on the political future of India in the following terms:

"He (Sir John Simon) suggested that what might be required after the reports of the Statutory Commission and the Indian Central Committee have been made, considered, and published but before the stage is reached of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, would be setting up a conference in which His Majesty's Government should meet representatives both of British India and of the States for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament... ... ...With these views I understand His Majesty's Government are in complete accord".

"The goal of British policy was stated in the declaration of August 1917, to be that of providing for the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to be progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.........The ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than once publicly declared that it is the desire of the British Government that India should in the fulness of time take her place in the Empire in equal partnership with the Dominions.

But in view of the doubts that have been expressed both in Great Britain and in India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's Constitutional Progress as therein contemplated is the attainment of Dominion Status".

On the 1st November, the political leaders responsible for the Nehru Report met in a Conference at the residence of Mr. V. J. Patel, President of the Assembly, to consider the Viceroy's announcement. Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Sir T. B. Sapru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Mahomed Ali, and Mr. J. M. Sengupta were among those who attended the Conference.

The Conference decided to ask Mr. Gandhi, Sir T. B. Sapru and Pandit J. Nehru to prepare drafts regarding the statement it should issue. Finally, the Conference approved of Mr. Gandhi's draft with modification by incorporating certain suggestions made in Sir T. B. Sapru's proposals. Pandit J. Nehru first stood out as a dissentient but later agreed after great persuasion to sign the statement. "The Delhi Manifesto" issued by the All Party leaders, after appreciating "the sincerity underlying the declarations as also the desire of the British Government to placate the Indian opinion" and while hoping "to be able to tender their co-operation to His Majesty's Government in the effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Status suitable for India's needs," went on to state :

"We consider it vital for the success of the proposed Conference that ;—(A) A policy of general conciliation should be definitely adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere. (B) That political prisoners should be granted a general amnesty. (C) That the representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured and that the Indian National Congress, as the largest among them, should have predominant representation.

"Some doubt has been expressed about the interpretation of paragraph in the statement made by the Viceroy on behalf of His

Majesty's Government regarding Dominion Status. We understand, however, that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Constitution for India. We hope that we are not mistaken in thus interpreting the import and implications of the weighty pronouncement of H. E. the Viceroy".

The statement concluded by recording the leaders' hope and faith that "a more liberal spirit should be infused in the Government of the Country" (pending the promulgation of the new Constitution) and that "the public should be made to feel that a new era has commenced even from to-day and that a new constitution is to be but a register of that fact".

Thus were the great leaders hypnotised by the spell of the Viceroy's empty announcement. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who had up till then stood out firmly for complete independence was now won over to the great task of securing a Dominion Constitution. Even the terms of the statement were watered down under the old excuse of accommodating the moderate leaders.

A counter-manifesto was simultaneously issued by Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, Dr. Kitchlew and Maulana Abdul Bari who refused to sign the leaders' manifesto. They expressed their emphatic conviction that the Viceroy's statement as it stood contained nothing over which they could enthuse. They then proceeded to examine the two important commitments made by the Viceroy as regards (1) definition of responsible government as Dominion Status and (2) provision of a conference between representatives of the British Government and the representatives of British India and Indian States. They proceeded to examine these two points as under :

"With regard to the first we would like to point out to those who may feel enthusiastic over the Viceregal announcement that there is no mention in that statement as to when Dominion Status will be granted. We, however, stand unequivocally for complete Independence not as a distant goal but as the immediate objective and if Dominion Status were granted by 31st December 1929, we would still stand out boldly for complete Independence. We gave expression to this view at the last session of the Indian National

Congress at Calcutta and it will be our duty to re-iterate it when the Congress assembles at Lahore in December next".

"With regard to the second commitment we feel that the Conference proposed is not really a Round Table Conference, and we would request our countrymen not to give it that dignified appellation... It is not clear whether the Conference will be confined to representatives of the British Government on the one side and representatives of Indian Nationalists on the other. Nor is it known that the conclusions to be arrived at by the Conference will be final and binding on both the parties.

"In conclusion, we would ask our countrymen not to be misled by pious statements of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State but to increase their efforts in the task of preparing the country for the situation they will have to face at the time of the Lahore Congress".

Whatever enthusiasm had been artificially generated by the Delhi Manifesto over the Viceroy's pronouncement began to ebb away in a few weeks' time. A reactionary debate in Parliament on the Indian question reinforced by the publication of the subsequent correspendence between the Premier and Mr. Baldwin served to turn the tide against the Government. And as no explanation of the qestions raised in the Delhi Manifesto was received from the Viceroy a second conference of the signatories was convened at Allahabad on the 18th November. The Conference was attended by nine members of the Congress Working Committee, including Mr. Gandhi, Mr. J. Nehru and Mr. Subhash Chandra Bose and thirty other representatives of the different parties. The following Resolution was unanimously adopted by the Conference :

"This Conference has viewed with misgivings and dissatisfaction the recent debates in Parliament in regard to the Viceroy's declaration. This Conference, however, decides to stand by the Delhi Manifesto, and hopes that a full and early response will be made to it".

The Congress Working Committee at the same time passed a Resolution "Confirming the action taken at Delhi by Congressmen, it being clearly understood that this confirmation is constitutionally limited to the date of holding of the forthcoming Session of the Indian National Congress".

On November 30th the Tenth Session of the All India Trade Union Congress opened at Nagpur under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Prior to the holding of the open session the Executive Council met in the morning. On the motion of Mr. Deshpande, Secretary of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union, the committee passed by a majority a Resolution for the rejection of the Nehru Report which was, in their opinion, meant to perpetuate the British Imperialism in India and urged boycott of the Whitley Commission.

A heated discussion lasting over two hours centred round the Resolution, moved by Mr. Deshpande for the affiliation of the Trade Union Congress to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat. The House by majority passed the Resolution.

This gave rise to speculations as to the effect of passing the Resolution, for the Pan-Pacific Secretariat was said to be under the control of the Communist International. Feeling ran high among the section of delegates who did not support Mr. Deshpande's Resolution.

The same afternoon the Moderate Labour leaders, including Messrs. N.M. Joshi, Giri, Shivarao and Dewan Chamanlal, decided to secede from the Congress as it had in their opinion been won over by the Extremists and the Communists. When the open session was held on the 1st of December the President read out the statement of the seceding Trade Unionists who eventually withdrew from the Congress.

On the 15th of December Mr. Jamnadas Mehta presided over the Independence Conference at Allahabad, which passed a Resolution declaring complete independence as the immediate objective of India and regarding Dominion Status as the consolidation of imperialism with the aid of native capitalism, landlordism, and feudalism. On the same day the Bombay Youth Conference held under the presidency of Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya passed a Resolution declaring complete national independence as the immediate objective of India.

On the 16th of December the London Congress Committee adopted a Resolution appreciating Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose's feat

of vision in discerning the pre-arranged trap laid in the Viceregal announcement, and asking him not to fail at the Lahore Congress to put up a strenuous fight for complete independence.

On the 23rd December a daring attempt was made to blow up the special train in which the Viceroy was returning to Delhi from his South Indian tour. No one was injured. The bomb which was buried between the rails exploded when the fourth coach was passing over the point, while the Viceroy's saloon was two coaches behind. A concealed cable running to a small battery about three hundred yards from a railway station was subsequently discovered.

Almost immediately after his arrival in Delhi the Viceroy received Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, President Patel and Sir T. B. Sapru. The Conference was obviously arranged as an eleventh hour effort to prevent the Lahore Congress from deciding for complete independence. The result of the Conference was set out in an official statement as follows:

"Discussion was limited to the function of the proposed conference in London. It was pointed out that any member of this Conference would be free to advocate any proposals, and that any measure of unanimity at the Conference would necessarily carry weight with British opinion".

"On behalf of the Congress Party, the view was expressed that unless previous assurances were given by His Majesty's Government that the purpose of the conference was to draft a scheme for Dominion Status, which His Majesty's Government would undertake to support, there would be grave difficulty about Congress participation".

"His Excellency made it plain that the conference was designed to elicit the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament, and that it was impossible for him or His Majesty's Government in any way to pre-judge the action of the Conference or to restrict the liberty of Parliament. Conversations concluded".

Nothing now remained for Mr. Gandhi but to initiate a Resolution on complete independence at the Lahore Congress, and his threatened campaign of non-violent non-co-operation in the new year. To the proceedings of the historic session of the Indian National Congress we will now turn.

LXXIII

THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS NEGOTIATION

AND now to the evolutions of the Congress policy during 1929. As we have seen during the last few pages, Mr. Gandhi stroved during the year with might and main to put off as far as possible the evil day of the adoption of complete independence and the launching of the campaign of non-violent, non-co-operation. Even though the Government of India had replied to the Resolutions of the Calcutta Congress in unequivocal terms by launching a new offensive against the Congress and Labour leaders alike, Mr. Gandhi hastened to negotiate with Lord Irwin at the garden party that had been obediently arranged by President Patel in February 1929. As the year advanced, the Government drive became more pronounced and persistent. It was then clear as daylight that Government had no more intention of granting any Dominion Constitution to India than of flying to the moon. The Congress leaders, however, hastened to cherish and evoke false hopes about the future trend of Government policy as Lord Irwin sailed for England with a view to confabulate and conspire with the new Labour Government as to the best means of pouring oil over the troubled water of India. By July and August, however, the twin historic trials of Bhagat Singh and the Lahore prisoners on the one side and the Meerut prisoners on the other, began to revolutionise the thoughts and feelings of the masses of India. The new slogan of "Long Live Revolution" was fast racing round the country and was lustily echoed and cheered everywhere. All this left Mr. Gandhi in no doubt about the ultimate result of the forthcoming statement of the Viceroy and his contemplated negotiations with him and he cleverly set out to build up a formidable dam to stem the tide of revolutionary forces at the Lahore Congress.

He saw that nothing but miracle could prevent the ensuing session of the Congress from declaring for complete independence. But if he had proclaimed Dominion Status as the charter of India's independence, why could he not now draft an equivocal

formula of complete independence such as would give him ample loophole for interpreting it as compatible and consistent with partnership—*i.e* , subjection to the British Empire or the British Commonwealth of Nations. There was, however, a fly in the ointment. For he realised to his great dismay that both Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, the left wing leaders, had fought to the last at the Calcutta Congress for complete independence as implying absolute severance from the British Empire. Both these leaders had added immensely to their universal popularity during the year 1929, amongst the rising youths and militant working classes. Each of these leaders was a host in himself. Both combined on the Congress platform at Lahore might be easily enabled by the heroic message and silent sufferings of the Lahore and Meerut prisoners to give even the redoubtable Gandhi himself the beating of his lifetime. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, saw his only chance in splitting the virile partnership of Bose and Nehru. To that end he worked assiduously during the whole year and reaped his crowning success in the most amazing manner.

We have seen before how leaving Mr. S. C. Bose as incorrigible Mr. Gandhi had begun to operate on the heart and imagination of young Nehru by showering fulsome compliments on him at the Calcutta Congress. Thus had he succeeded in securing the temporary absence of Mr. J. Nehru from the tumultuous discussions in the Subjects Committee. He could not, however, be prevented from allying himself with Mr. S. C Bose in the open Congress by supporting his amendment on Mr. Gandhi's Resolution. Such expedients, whatever their value in the past, could no more be relied upon in the hotter air of Lahore. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, boldly hit upon the extraordinary device of setting Mr. J. Nehru on the dizzy pedestal of the Congress Presidential Chair as the only solution of his nerve-wrecking troubles. Thus only could the irresponsible fire eater of yesterday be not only shifted from the fighting arena and be separated from his erstwhile colleagues—whom he would otherwise be in honour pledged to fight the common battle—but could further be saddled with the artificial burden of the grave responsibility of holding the balance even between the right and the left wing factions at the Congress. So not only did Mr. Gandhi firmly and persistently refuse the

Presidential Chair to which he was elected by the overwhelming majority of the Provincial Congress Committee and the Reception Committee at Lahore, but he carried on a most vigorous propaganda in the Press and on the platform, in private conversations and public discussions, for electing Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to the Presidentship of the next Congress. Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel was easily persuaded by him to keep out of the race. And by the end of September 1929 the All-India Congress Committee was induced by Mr. Gandhi to install young Nehru on the Presidential Gadi of the Lahore Congress.

Since that day Mr. J. Nehru was a changed man. The October announcement was a transparently hollow device of British Imperialism to delude the Indian Nation in general and the Congress leaders in particular. Mr. Gandhi and Company hastened to swallow the bait. Mr. J. Nehru, now the President-elect of the Congress, hesitated for a while. But the new burden of responsibility that had been insidiously thrust on his young shoulders did not fail of its calculated result. Mr. J. Nehru after sitting on the fence for a few seconds jumped on the wrong side and decisively parted company with Mr. S. C. Bose and other colleagues whom he might have otherwise joined in issuing a counter-blast to the hypocritical manifesto of the Congress leaders.

Thus did Mr. Gandhi set the stage for the discussions at the Lahore Congress. No doubt he tried to catch at straws like a drowning man till the very date of the Congress to prevent it from declaring for even his carefully contrived equivocal formula of complete independence. President Patel again helped him to confabulate with the Viceroy. Unfortunately, he left him no excuse for back-sliding. Luckily, Mr. Gandhi was forewarned and forearmed. And when he entrained for Lahore from Delhi he was fairly sure of the final outcome for which he had carefully planned for months past.

All this manœuvring was hardly discerned by the thousand of Congress delegates who lustily shouted "Bande Mataram" and "Long Live Revolution" and gave a tumultuous ovation to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as he ascended the rostrum to deliver his Presidential address (29th Dec.) While he indulged in fiery oratory and militant vocabulary, he proved a veritable Hamlet of Indian

politics. He tried to cover up the shame of the Delhi manifesto by saying "I know not to-day if he did right or wrong." While he condemned the Indian States as "the most curious relics of a bygone age," he had no hesitation in proclaiming the willingness of the Congress "to confer with such rulers as are prepared to do so and to devise means whereby the transition (to better state) may not be too sudden." Similarly, while he condemned the exploitation of the agricultural and industrial workers of India and chastised even the Congress for weighing the balance heavily against the exploited masses he presently surrendered his whole position by admitting that "perhaps this Congress as a whole cannot go very far to-day with the programme of the economic emancipation of the millions of workers and peasants." How low he had fallen from his own former postion could be judged by the fact that he had himself demanded only a year ago that peasantry and workers should be organised on the basis of an economic programme to be drafted by the A. I. C. C. Since then Government had passed Czarist laws against the workers and clapped their most militant leaders in jail. But the erstwhile President of the All India Trade Union Congress when confronted with the opportunity of his life-time to arm the millions of his countrymen with a new gospel and the new technique faltered and fumbled.

His retrogression on the political objective of the country must undoubtedly be pronounced even more inexcusable and shameful. While he talked glibly of independence he deliberately refrained from uttering a single syllable regarding complete separation from the British Empire. The ex-President of the first Republican Congress in India in 1927—the 2nd session has never been held since—coveniently forgot to refer, however indirectly, to the cherished goal of the Socialist Republic of India. These omissions—contrived and manipulated, we may be sure, in collusion with Mr. Gandhi—were rendered even more unpardonable after Bhagat Singh and his friends had invited untold sufferings on themselves by proclaiming themselves as soldiers of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. And when he concluded his empty address on the militant note of "Long Live Revolution—amidst the thunderous applause of the whole house—he should certainly

have realised that he was trying to use a resounding slogan to cover up an ignominious surrender.

Let us now turn to the proceedings of the Congress.

Mr. Gandhi and his pocket Subjects Committee sought to give a sop to the left wing elements in the Congress by authorising the President to move the very first Resolution expressing appreciation "of the supreme self-sacrifice of Jatindra Nath Das and Phoongi U. Wizaya", offering "condolence to their families" and further expressing the opinion "that the foreign Government in India is responsible for their self immolation".

After passing such a half-hearted homage to the supreme heroism of only those revolutionaries who had already laid down their lives at the altar of the Motherland—leaving out the living ones entombed in the jail of Lahore and Meerut, Rangoon and Calcutta, bereft of solace or backing from the National Congress, Mr. Gandhi hastened to pour out the boiling lava of his sympathies for the representative of the same "foreign Government" by moving the following Resolution:

"This Congress deplores the bomb outrage perpetrated on the Viceroy's train, and reiterates its own conviction that such action is not only contrary to the creed of the Congress but results in harm being done to the national cause. It congratulates the Viceroy and Lady Irwin and their party including the poor servants on their fortunate and narrow escape".

Nor did the high personality of the mover of Resolution prevent many a delegates from fighting him tooth and nail in the open Congress. Swami Govindananda said that the creed of non-violence should not be forced on those who believed in different means to achieve the freedom of the country. Dr. Alam denounced the Resolution as unimportant, improper and harmful. By such Resolutions, he declared, the hands of the administration were strengthened so that innocent people were harassed. Mr. Rajah condemned the Resolution as contrary to the anti-imperialistic outlook of the Congress. Baba Gurdit Singh of "Komagata Maru" fame felt that by this Resolution they were

deceiving Englishmen, and provoking young men to greater acts of violence. Moreover, he added, so long as the Lawrence and Outram statues showed the sword by which they won India, young men would be provoked to draw the sword.

All this notwithstanding even a mild amendment to delete the words about congratulating the Viceroy was defeated by 897 against 816 votes. The division, no doubt, dealt a staggering blow to the political prestige of Mr. Gandhi. Still his will was done.

The curtain was then raised on the central act of the Congress drama, when Mr. Gandhi mounted the rostrum to move the following pompous Resolution on "complete independence":

"The Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the manifesto signed by party leaders, including Congressmen, on the Viceregal pronouncement of the 31st October relating to Dominion Status and appreciates the efforts of the Viceroy towards the settlement of the natural movement for Swaraj".

The Congress, however, having considered all that has since happened, and the result of the meeting between Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders and the Viceroy, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. This Congress, therefore, in pursuance of the Resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year declares that the word "Swaraj" in Article 1 of the Congress Constitution shall mean Complete Independence and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's report to have lapsed and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independenee for India.

"As a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for Independence and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of creed, this Congress resolves upon a complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and Committees constituted by the

Government and calls upon the Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating, directly or indirectly, in future elections, and directs the present Congress members of the Legislatures and Committee to resign their seats".

"This Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress and authorises the All-India Congress Committee, wherever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary".

It again fell to the lot of Mr. S. C. Bose—now sadly deprived of the co-operation of Mr. J. Nehru—to move the following counter—Resolution to be substituted for Mr. Gandhi's Resolution :—

"In pursuance of the Resolution passed at the last session of the Congress held in Calcutta, this Congress now declares that "Swaraj" in Congress creed means full independence implying thereby complete severance of British connection.

In order to bring about the overthrow in India of British Imperialism and its Indian Allies and achieve complete independence, this Congress resolves on the one hand to carry on ceaseless campaign in favour of independence with a view to establishing parallel Government in India and on the other hand launch the campaign of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes and general strikes wherever and whenever possible.

"With a view to give effect to the above two-fold programme, this Congress calls upon the people of the country to undertake at once the task of organising the youths, workers and the peasants and other oppressed section of the Indian people".

"In order to ensure concentration on the above programme and in conformity with the new Congress creed, this Congress declares complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures Committees appointed by the Government, local bodies including the institutions like Port Trusts and Law Courts and calls upon

Congressmen to abstain from participation in future elections, upon the present members of the legislatures, committees and local bodies to resign their seats, and upon the lawyers to suspend their practice forthwith".

"This Congress further authorises the All-India Congress Committee to give effect to the above programme according to circumstances prevailing in the country and to meet any situation that may arise while executing the above programme".

The sharp contrast in which Mr. Bose's counter-Resolution stood against the back-ground of Mr. Gandhi's Resolution was unmistakable. Mr. Bose virtually threw out a serious challenge to Mr. Gandhi and the Congress to state in unequivocal terms if they really stood for complete independence. The full implications of the new objective had been clearly brought out during the Congress debates of the last two years. Had not Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime mover and initiator of the Resolution of independece at the Madras Congress of 1927, hastened to preside almost immediately afterwards over the first Republican Congress ever held on the Indian soil ? Was not again complete independnence interpreted as implying complete severance from the British Empire throughout the year 1928 by the left wing leaders of the Congress in their persistent fight against the reactionary creed of Dominion Status ? The issue had indeed been made clear beyond the possibility of any doubt. Mr. Gandhi and his followers knew exactly what Young India wanted when it shouted for complete independence. Mr. Gandhi knew when he ascended the rostrum at Lahore—as he undoubtedly knew it at Calcutta—that the vast bulk of the political intelligentsia was now determined to break all the chains that bound down India to a foreign empire and to inaugurate the new Republic of United India. Mr. Bose now came forward to give utterance to the deep-rooted cry of the Indian people that was echoed from many a jail in all parts of the country. But once again Mr. Gandhi clouded the whole issue with a verbal smoke screen and easily escaped from the dilemma set before him by the younger leaders.

History will undoubtedly pronounce a more terrible verdict on his role at Lahore than even on his open surrender at Calcutta.

He was undoubtedly more frank and open-hearted in his advocacy of British Imperialism a year before. For, then he stood frankly, as ever before, for Dominion Status and the continued slavery of 350 millions of India to a small nation of about 40 millions and he was not ashamed to confess it. So people knew exactly what he meant and what to expect of him. But when he found it impossible at Lahore—after the sufferings of Bhagat Singh, the martyrdom of Jatin Das, the incarceration of the Meerut prisoners, the sweeping wave of mass strikes raging all over the country and the series of rebuffs that he had received from dear old Lord Irwin—to resist any longer the national demand for complete independence, he unscrupulously decided to pronounce and preach the new gospel with his tongue in the cheek. He moved the Resolution on complete independence while he did not mean to stand for its obvious implications. He came forward to shout forth the new war cry of the nation while he remained at heart a soldier of the Old Guard. He accepted the creed of independence by treating it as convertible with Dominion Status. If Dominion Status was openly called by him a charter of independence, why could not complete independence, he argued within himself, be deemed compatible with subservience to the British Empire? Thus he in the inscrutable and deceptive silence on the sovereign issue of complete separation from the British Empire and received a tumultuous ovation by declaring for complete independence while he remained a thorough Imperialist at heart.

While he thus befogged the issue of the new objectives with equivocal words—which, as we shall presently see, he turned to good account within a few weeks—he unhesitatingly and categorically rejected the new technique of labour strikes which was naturally and insistently stressed by the left wing leaders. One should have imagined that the whole course of events in 1929 would leave the Congress no alternative but to strengthen its poor armoury with such a matchless weapon of international repute. It was indeed only by calling a general strike throughout the land that the people could give a resounding reply to the challenge that the British Government had thrown out by arresting the most militant labour leaders. As we have shown before, it was not so much the threatened resumption of Mr. Gandhi's civil disobedience movement—which had been found

out long ago by Indians and foreigners alike—but new development of continued labour unrest possibly culminating in a general strike, that had already struck terror in the hearts of the British shopkeepers in India. So Mr. Bose pressed for it though in a somewhat half-hearted manner. But the issue was never in doubt. Mr. Gandhi hardly found it necessary to say a word about it. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's defection had already been secured by promoting him to the Presidential Chair. And while 973 delegates had been found to vote for a similar amendment of Mr. Bose a year ago—as against 1350 who voted for Mr. Gandhi's Resolution—his counter-Resolution was declared lost in the warmer atmosphere of Lahore without even the ceremony of a formal division.

It should be added here in passing that we cannot congratulate Mr. Bose, much as we would like it, on moving a really extremist Resolution. While he spoke of severance from the British Empire he could not summon up enough courage to announce India's historic mission of founding a Sovereign Republic. Again, while he advised the Congress to embark on "general strikes whenever and wherever possible", he did not give a full-throated utterance to the historic war cry of a general strike such as had brought even the great Czar of Russia to his knees in 1905 and had brought even the Conservative working classes of England within an ace of victory in 1926. Such a really radical Resolution embodying the new political and economic ideals of the nation and the new formidable weapons of realising them could only have been moved by militant working-class leaders. But Government had already secured their absence from the field of battle, by locking them up in the Meerut jail.

The final victory of Mr. Gandhi's Resolution—after all the amendments, most of them on minor issues, had been rejected—served to reveal the complete hollowness of the new slogan "Long Live Revolution" that continued to resound everywhere throughout the session. Dr. Alam objecting to the appreciative reference to the Viceroy in Mr. Gandhi's Resolution stated that as they were handing it down to posterity as a Charter of liberty it should not bear any trace of slavery. But the so-called Charter of Liberty was a snare and a delusion.

LXXIV

BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARIBDIS.

ONE would only malign the sacred term Liberty if he even attempted to fix it on Mr. Gandhi's hypocritical Resolution. It bristled with self-contradictions. What people in the world, in all history, claimed to fight for complete independence while they remained content to willingly bend their necks to the yoke of a foreign Empire? What nation again—except unfortunate India hypnotised by a pseudo saint and modern Chanakya—could ever be deluded enough to dream for a single moment of achieving sovereign independence by launching on a puny programme of Civil Disobedience and non-payment of taxes whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary? No. Individuals or organisations, that really pine for the heavenly breath of Liberty, are made of sterner stuff. They have no time or leisure for ingenious equivocations and transparently hollow devices. They unerringly fix their eyes on the target and shoot at it straight and unerringly. They do not falter and stumble. They don't pause to calculate. They speak straight from the shoulder like men and do it and go to their doom like heroes.

The verdict of history was already anticipated at Lahore by the speeches delivered and the Resolution adopted at the annual Conference held by the Swadhin Bharat Sangh (Political Sufferers' Conference) on the 28th December 1929—on the eve of the Congress session. The new Sangh was ostensibly "a body of political sufferers and prisoners the objects whereof were to expose the bad treatment by the Government of men working in the political field and to bring to public notice the indifferent attitude of the Indian National Congress in respect of such persons". There is no doubt, however, that the new Sangh was really intended to carry on a vigorous propaganda for the complete political independence of India and to level a scathing indictment at the sham heroics of the Congress. Lala Hanwant Sahai, the Chairman, gave a full-throated utterance to the revolutionary outlook on the political situation in the following words;

"The activities of the Congress and other political leaders have always been confined to raising protests against Government actions and obtaining the partial redress of some grievances. *The recent Delhi Manifesto had clearly shown that the leaders have not been able to get rid of this slave mentality.* To my mind it appears that the Round Table Conference will prove to be nothing more than a Governmental inquiry committee composed of men chosen directly or indirectly by the Government. There is a dark feature of the conference. It will give rise to certain problems relating to the States which might retard the cause of National advance rather than help it. If they wanted to vindicate the honour of the motherland they should whole-heartedly strive to win independence for India as opposed to Dominion Status by non-violence means".

When the revolutionaries of this conference spoke about independence they meant, of course, the complete sovereignty of United India free from the shackles of the British Empire. And had not even Mr. Gandhi stated repeatedly since 1920 that he would seek the freedom of India within the Empire if possible and outside the Empire if necessary? Thus he had left no *via media* between Dominion Status on the one hand and Independence outside the Empire on the other. It was indeed on this basis that he had fought against the very idea of unequivocal independence since 1921. But now faced by the inevitable crisis, he took refuge under a philosophical subtlety, reduced independence to an abstraction and the whole Congress session to a farce and a mockery by getting it to proclaim a new slogan and a new message that were cunningly deprived beforehand of all real significance.

A sham fight had to be staged in pursuance of the sham Resolution of the Lahore Congress. To the hesitating, halting and wavering course of the war dramatics in the New Year of 1930 we will now turn.

The deeper implications of the policy and programme adopted at the Lahore Congress were hardly understood by the thousands of the Congress Delegates and political enthusiasts who had mustered strong to witness the historic session from all parts of the country. They had acclaimed the Independence Resolution. They had no doubt in their minds that the Congress leaders were out at last to free India from the embrace of the foreign Empire. They

had cheered the Resolution on civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes. They interpreted it doubtless as a clarion call for a non-violent battle for freedom. They had saluted the National flag. In their simplicity they imagined that the Congress would never swear allegiance to any other. They had lustily shouted "Long Live Revolution." They believed that a revolution—albeit its peaceful variety—was at hand.

Mr. Gandhi saw the smouldering volcano—or a series of them—on all sides. The very air appeared to be impregnated with a brewing thunderstorm. All these signs and portents clearly cut out his role for Mr. Gandhi. He set out to explain away the Congress Resolution on independence. In the sacred name of *Satyagraha* he prepared to wage a relentless war against all forces of armed revolution and industrial upheaval. He must also muzzle up the hotheads in the ranks of the Congress in the holy name of discipline, so as to preserve intact the inevitable avenues of negotiations and discussions with British agents in India. But he knew full well that his power of holding the forces of revolution in leash depended on his readiness and capacity for launching a mock-heroic struggle which, while doing the least damage to the foundations of British power, might enshrine him once again in the imagination of the millions of the country as the Commander-in-Chief of the great war of independence.

And now to the rapid sequence of events in the beginning of 1930, when Mr. Gandhi began to supply once again front-page news to the whole world.

The All India Congress Committee met on January 1 to appoint the Working Committee for the new year. Mr. Gandhi proposed a bloc of ten members as the choice of the President. The Leftists and the Rightists objected to this procedure. On votes being taken on the subject 78 voted for Mr. Gandhi's procedure of *en bloc* voting while as many as 62 voted against it. Eventually the official list was declared carried by an overwhelming majority.

The new Working Committee met on the 2nd January to consider the detailed programme of the campaign. That it should

appeal to all the members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures to resign their seats was a foregone conclusion. But it took a more dramatic step when "in order to carry the message of complete independence to the remotest villages of India it appointed Sunday, 26th January 1930, as the day of the celebration when the declaration to be hereafter issued by the Committee will be read to the meeting and the members present at the meeting will be invited to signify by show of hands their assent to the declaration." While issuing the precious manifesto—to which we will presently refer in some detail—Mr. Gandhi and his Committee specifically ordained that there should be no speeches. "On the most historic occasion in the national struggle when thousands and tens of thousands would gather to hear the word, there was to come no word of command, there should be no loosing of mass passion. Such passions are not good for the spiritual peace of those with vested interests. Only a set manifesto was to be used and then the thousands must go back." Thus the process of muzzling was set in operation by Mr. Gandhi right from the first day of the year.

On January 3, Pandit Motilal Nehru sounded a call to all the Congress members of the Legislatve Assembly to resign their seats immediately.

On January 6, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru issued an appeal to hoist the national flag at 8 a. m. on 26th January and to hold the processions and the independence celebrations and meetings in the evening.

An important event threw an instructive floodlight on the motives of the foreign friends of India's new movement. On January 7 Senator Blaine moved the following Resolution in the Senate of the United States of America :

"Whereas the people of India are spontaneously moving towards the adoption of self-Government under the constitutional form with popular approval and seeking national independence, therefore, be it resolved that the Senate of the United States mindful of the struggle for independence that gave birth to our Republic, participates with the people in the deep interest that they feel for the success of the people of India in their struggle

for liberty and independence, and be it further resolved that the Senate of the United States pledges its constitutional support to the president of the United States whenever he may deem it proper *to recognise the sovereignty and independence of India and recommends an early recognition*".

Thus while a true American Citizen was emphasizing the twin nations of sovereignty and republic that were inseparably associated with the very idea of national independence, Mr. Gandhi began to exercise all his dialectical skill in turning his back on all such extravagant notions. Reviewing the Lahore session of the Congress in "Young India," dated 9th January, he expounded the old and the new objectives of the Congress as follows :

"In strict accordance with the Calcutta Resolution and owing to a combination of circumstances undersigned by anybody, Dominion Status gave place at the stroke of midnight, 31st December 1929, to complete independence as the immediate objective of the Congress......It is as well. Apart from the Calcutta Resolution, Mr. Benn's statement that India already had Dominion Status in action made that phrase impossible of acceptance to convey the nation's meaning......*For the Congress, Dominion Status meant complete independence plus voluntary partnership with Britain as it might be with any other nation for mutual good.* Lastly, it has been of late loudly whispered that independence was illegal......If Swaraj was a doubtful word it becomes unequivocal by becoming Purna Swaraj".

Thus did Mr. Gandhi disgrace himself and the Congress by interpreting complete independence as something implicit in the definition of Dominion Status. Thus might the heavenly breath of freedom be said to subsist in the hell of slavery. What an Irish Republican or even the American Senator—referred to above—would have to say to such cringing casuistry could best be imagined.

Whilst thus the central Resolution lays down the country's objective and the methods for its attainment," continued Mr. Gandhi "it does not rule out the idea of a Conference in every circumstance......I can mention at least one such circumstance (in which Congress might well be represented at a Government Conference). If the British Government invites the Congress to a

conference, that is, to discuss and frame not any scheme but a scheme definitely of independent Government and fulfils the other conditions suitable for such a conference, I take it that the Congress leaders will gladly respond. *Indeed, a conference there must be at some stage or other*".

Thus did Mr. Gandhi cast coquettish glances at the Viceregal Lodge even while he was trying to lead the nation by trying himself to the tail-end of the radical forces in the country

Then as to the burning issue of civil disobedience. "I know that it is a duty primarily devolving upon me. I must confess that I do not see the atmosphere for it to-day. I want to discover a formula whereby sufficient provision can be made for avoiding suspension by reason of Chauri Chaura.

Time must come when there may be a fight to the finish with one's back to the wall. With the present temper of many Congressmen with our internal dissensions, with the communal tension, it is difficult to discover an effective and innocent formula. It may be impossible to offer civil disobedience at this stage in the name of the Congress.........Granted a perfectly non-violent atmosphere and a fulfilled constructive programme, I would undertake to lead a mass civil disobedience struggle to a successful issue in the course of a few months".

So the great idea was to "discover an effective and innocent formula" and to ensure "a perfectly non-violent atmosphere" in order to lead the battle to successful issue which meant, of course, new negotiations—and pacts—and gilded chains!

Meanwhile the Government offensive continued unabated. On the 11th January the Magistrate framed a formal charge against 31 Meerut prisoners under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code for waging war against the King!

On January 23 Mr. Subash Chandra Bose and 11 other prominent Congressmen were sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment for carrying on seditious propaganda. These leaders were ostensively punished for leading the procession with placards bearing inscriptions like "Long Live Revolution", "Down with

Imperialism', etc., on the Political Sufferer's Day in August 1928, But really and truly Mr. Bose and his friends were punished for leading the left wing opposition within the Congress. They had committed the unpardonable crime of meaning independence—as the whole world meant it—when they talked of it!

On the 25th January the Viceroy made his usual inaugural speech in opening the winter session of the Legislative Assembly. Referring to the Congress Resolution on Independence and Civil Disobodience he said: "It remains my firm desire as it is of His Majesty's Government following the recent professed wish of the House of Commons to do everything that is possible for conciliation in order that Great Britain and India may collaborate together in finding a solution of the present difficulties..... But it is no less incumbent on me to make it plain that I shall discharge to the full the responsibility resting upon myself and my Government for the effective maintenance of the authority of law".

All India replied to this insolent threat of the mailed fist by observing the victorious celebrations of the Independence Day on the very next day (the 26th January) with unparalleled enthusiasm. "Reports from all over the country show," said Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the course of a Press statement, "how magnificently the Independence Day has been celebrated by all classes......Towns and villages vied with each other in showing their enthusiastic adherence to independence. In the great cities led by Bombay and Calcutta scores of thousand met and took the great resolve and in the countryside thousands of villages assembled at numerous village-meetings... On the Independence Day it was the nation itself that spoke, India herself with a million voices taking the pledge of Independence and the resolve to sever the British connection which had ruined her in so many ways. The pledge has been taken the flag of freedom has been hoisted. Let no one who has taken, the pledge forget it or weaken in his resolve and let no one do anything which may bring dishonour to the National Flag ....

And yet future events were to show how Guru Gandhi and his Chela "Veer Jawahir" were the very first to forget the solemn pledge, "to sever the British connection" and "to bring dishonour

to the National Flag" by lowering it before the Viceregal Lodge at Delhi in February 1931.

Let us now turn to the flamboyant manifesto that was read and adopted all over the country at the instance of the Congress authorities on the 26th January. The operative paragraphs read as follows :

"We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives the people of the rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence".

The manifesto then tried to set out in some detail how India had been ruined economically, politically, etc. It then concluded on the following note:

"We hold it to be a crime against Man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country... ..We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence even under provocation the end of this inhuman rule is assured..."

It is difficult to find language to express one's sense of shame and humiliation at this base and spurious imitation of the historic proclamations that have been issued by the chosen representative of subject nations on the eve of their militant fights for deliverance. No nation that set out on the invincible march for sovereign independence deemed it worthy of its national dignity to make such a long-winded and cringing apologia for the establishment of its inherent and inalienable right.

So far, however, was Mr. Gandhi's mind removed from any notion of the Indian Republic and the sovereign Independent State

of India and so anxious he was to make amends for subscribing to the heresy of severance of the British connection (included in the manifesto of Independence) that he hastened within four days (January 30) to congratulate the Viceroy for clearing the air and to beg for the following 11 concessions as the price of the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movemen and his virtual co-operation with Government:

(1) Total Prohibition.

(2) Reduction of the Rupee ratio to 1/4s.

(3) Reduction of land revenue by at least 50 per cent. and making it subject to legislative control.

(4) Abolition of salt tax.

(5) Reduction of military expenditure by at least 50 per cent.

(6) Reduction of the salaries of the highest grade service to one half or less so as to suit the reduced revenue.

(7) Protective tariff for foreign cloth.

(8) Passage of the Costal Traffic Reservation Bill.

(9) Discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder, withdrawal of all political prosecutions and abrogation of Section 124A, Regulation III of 1918 and the like and permission to all political exiles to return.

(10) Abolition of the C. I. D. or its popular control.

(11) Issue of licenses to use firearms for self-defence subject to popular control.

"This is by no means an exhaustive list," continued Mr. Gandhi "of the present needs. But let the Viceroy satisfy these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no more of civil disobedience and the Congress will heartily participate in any Conference where there is a perfect freedom of expression and demand".

While Mr. Gandhi was thus engaged in dissecting the sovereign demand of independence into tiny bitswith a view to widen the avenues of eventual surrender, the left wing leaders of the Congress and Labour movement succeeded in llaunching a phenomenal strike on the G.I.P. Ry. Beginning on the 4th Febu^ery the strike involved within a few days nearly 75,000 workere engaged as far apart as Bombay and Bhopal, Nagpur and Jhansi. The trouble had indeed been brewing for a long time. The subordinate employees of the Railway. and especially the Indian section thereof, had been the victims of unjust and unfair treatment at the hands of the management. The polittcal implications of the strike were also clearly explained to the public. In the course of an appeal to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—who combined in his person the dual offices of the President of the National Congress and of the Trade Union Congress—to ,place himself at the head of the General Strike on oll Railways in sympathy with the workers of G.I.P. Railway, their Union stated its case in the follwoing terms:—

"The men of the G.I.P. are fighting not only to improve their condition, but they are fighting for the right to organise the ranks. They are fighting for their country. The economic struggle of the Indian workers cannot be separated from their political struggle. The fundamental causes of their unbearable condition lie in the domination of foreign Imperialism. We address you and say that if you call yourself Socialist, Republican, etc., and sincerely stand for the workers and peasants, come and take your stand for an immediate general strihe on all Indian railways... .."

It was indeed an explosion of such a general strike that had been anticipated months ago by the Calcutta correspondent of the *London Times* and had been dreaded by him far more than the threatened campaign of civil disobedience. The master card of a general strike had also been laid on the table of the Lahore Congress by Mr. Subhas Bose though it was summarily turned down by Mr. Gandhi and his servile majority. It was indeed an open secret by the beginning of 1930 that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—the erstwhile Socialist and Republican leader—had been won over to the reactionary creed of Mr. Gandhi by the simple expedient of placing the Presidential crown on his head. No

wonder then that the great Pandit rejected the appeal of the leftist Labour leaders in the following specious terms:—

"I agree with you that all industrial struggles are ultimately of the nature of political struggles......I am not sure, however, how far this point of view is understood by the average striker... You are aware that I have taken a number of responsibilities myself..... Under the circumstances it surprises me that you should expect me to forget all my responsibilities.

It is crystal clear at this distance of time that it was not the Labour leaders but the Pandit who should be pronounced guilty of for getting his responsibilities. For had not young President of the National Congress assumed the honour and the responsibility of the Presidentship of the Trade Union Congress too? Was it not then his duty in his dual capacity as President of both Congresses to lead a general strike on the Railways—such as served in 1905 as the dress rehearsal of the Russian Revolution of 1917? To plead, therefore, the threatened campaign of civil disobedience an excuse for giving a go-bye to the labour struggle was fatuous and absurd.

Unmindful, however, of the momentous struggle that was raging on one of the biggest Railways of India the Congress Working Committee decided at its meeting held in Ahmedabad on 15th February, to launch Civil Disobedience to reach the goal of independence and to authorise Mr. Gandhi "**and others believing in non-violence as an article of faith**" to start Civil Disobedience as and when they decide. After describing the above Resolution as "not so much political as a religious effort" and thanking the Committee "for perceiving the utter correctness of my position," Mr. Gandhi proceeded to comment on it as follows :—

"The responsibility is the greatest I have ever undertaken...... ..... My disobedience is sometimes the peremptory demand of love. Dangerous it undoubtedly is, but no more than the encircling violence. The danger lies is one direction—in the outbreak of violence side by side with civil disobedience. If it does, I know no way. Not retracing as at the time of Bardoli the struggle of freedom's battle against violence, no matter from what quarter the latter comes, must continue, till a single representative is left alive......"

Thus was the weak and puerile Resolutions of the Lahore Congress on civil disobedience deliberately watered down by Mr.

Gandhi on the very eve of fateful day of the national uprising. General strike had been ruled out in advance. All reference to non-payment of taxes were surprisingly dropped by the Congress Committee and Mr. Gandhi at this historic juncture. What was even more unconscionable, the only species of civil disobedience—mass disobedience of laws including revenue laws—which could conceivably be expected to touch the machinery of Government to any extent—was deliberately eschewed. Nay more, Mr. Gandhi cleverly used the senile Committee as his catspaw in seriously undermining the entire scheme of the civil disobedience movement by restricting it to those who believed in non-violence as an article of faith. Such faith—or any faith—could only be a matter of individual conscience. Policies—on the other hand—in politics or other spheres—could be general and be fittingly followed by large masses of men and women. In fine, Mr. Gandhi virtually attempted—though as it turned out in the end, quite in vain—to clip the very wings of his pet movement by seeking to continue it to a microscopic minority of doctrinaire *Satyagrahis*.

Then again the Resolution of the Working Committee enabled Mr. Gandhi to subordinate the all important political objective of independence of India to the method of non-voilence. For peaceful tactics could be and often are employed in political and labour struggle for purely practical and secular reasons. When you, however, enshrine non-violence as an indispensable article of faith and conscience in an essential human conflict you deliberately step out of the political into the religious arena. Mr. Gandhi was. therefore, rightly overjoyed when he described the Resolution as "not so much a political as a religious effort." He might well be proud of the newfeather in his cap. For even the Ahemdabad Congress held in December 1921 at the end of the most persistent campaign conducted by Mr. Gandhi for a year and more had to content itself—in the words of Babu Rajendraprasad—with advising "Congress workers and others to organise individual and mass civil disobedience **when the mass of the people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-voilence.**" And as Mr. Gandhi has himself referred to Bardoli in his comments quoted above, it might be useful to remember that even the "sober and responsible people" of Bardoli were required to subscribe to non-voilence, not as "an article of faith" but as "the only remedy for the redress of

the said grievances" (Punjab Khilafat and Swaraj) as a condition precedent to the inauguration of the mass movement of civil disodedience in the Kurukshetra of India.

Mr. Gandhi's motive in prescribing such an unprecedented test or his political followers was not far to seek. Did he not refer himself to the grime spectre of "encircling violence"—and "of the outbreak of violence side by side with civil disobedience". While the first phrase could well include violence perpetrated by Government as well as the people. the second supplied the real clue to the working of Mr. Gandhi's mind. He could not—he dared no—withdraw now, as he had done at Bardoli. He was too shrewd a politican not to have digested the lesson of the previous volte face. Yet the forces of popular agitation and struggle had undoubtedly assumed more novel, subtle and threatening forms. Even while Mr. Gandhi was penning the lines quoted above Bhagat Singh and his comrades were fasting in the Lahore Central Jail to protest against the treatment given to political prisoners in the Punjab jails. The millions who read the news undoubtedly imbibed something of the revolutionary propaganda which Bhagat Singh had designed of set purpose to carry on from behind the prison bars. The momentous strike operating on the G. I. P. Railway opened out different but no less fascinating vistas of disturbing activities before the vast masses of the Indian people. No doubt the Railway strike was so far conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. Still this strike and all such labour struggles appeared as only so many deviations from the correct path of *Satyagraha* in the eyes of Mr. Gandhi who had been linked up by a thousand ties, personal, political and even spiritual, with merchants and millowners. landlords and princes. The deviations were rapidly multiplying and widening everywhere in the country, while the mighty weapon of civil disobedience had been relegated to the limbo except for the brief run of limited Bardoli campaign—since the winter of 1922. And it was precisely the widening circumference and the increasing depth of the forces of resurgence and revolution—threatening to sweep and engulf the seething mass of India's humanity—that compelled Mr. Gandhi to restrict the whole scope of his movement by imposing an individualistic and religious character on what had been designed by the Lahore Congress as an essentially political movement.

What chance would such an individualistic and pacifist movement have against the steel armour of the British Government in India ? None whatever—if the restrictions imposed by the Working Committee and Mr. Gandhi were followed out in letter and in spirit. Provided, however, the dry bones of the cult of individual *Satyagraha* could be dressed out in picturesque raiment it might make a fair bid to arrest the imaginations and divert the energies of the enthusiastic youth and the hungry millions. A good few indeed could never be trusted to "believe in non-violence as an article of faith." They would also ride roughshod over the meticulous restrictions sought to be imposed by Mr. Gandhi on the whole movement in advance. But Government could be trusted to administer condign punishment to those found guilty of "outbreak of violence side by side with non-violence," while the vast majority would have been weaned from the gospel of Bhagat Singh and Dutt on the one hand and the Meerut prisoners on the other. Thus hundreds of thousands—millions could be delivered, bound hand and foot by the silken strings of non-violence, to the tender mercies of lathi charges, firing squads and jail authorities. Meanwhile the thin lines of a real *Satyagraha* would continue to offer the sacrifice of the innocents "till a real representative is left alive"!

And then ?—The whole country converted into a vast prison camp, its monotony varied by a few thousands in hospitals and a few hundreds in burial grounds and graveyards. In brief, national suicide—crowned with a stinging defeat for a more shameful surrender!

Such was the Millenia which Mr. Gandhi virtually prescribed to the nation when he was supposed to have given his clarion call for a victorious battle.

But these subtle, implications of Mr. Gandhi's words were perhaps dimly perceived by a handful at the time. The vast majority felt that Mr. Gandhi had set his mind on a crusade of self-immolation of himself and his chosen few and their imagination was excited and their hearts were aflame at the prospect of witnessing the gruesome yet holy spectacle of the Mahatma and his chosen hand falling victims under the heavy hand of the British Government, even as their forebears turned out in the

streets to gaze with reverential eyes at the Satis of old marching to the funeral pyre of their husbands.

Mr. Gandhi now realised that there was now no time to lose. The fighting forces were being aligned and mobilised on both sides. The labour leaders of Bombay had already given the word of battle. Bengal youths and workers were seething with discontent. Millions of tenants and peasants wondered why they could not, following in the footsteps of the labourers, declare a general campaign of non-payment of rents and taxes. Nor was Government caught napping. Repressive ordinances, police charges and military posts were being busily planned on an unprecedented scale to stem the tide of the threatened popular uprising. Nor had it forgotten to rouse its natural allies and hirelings to their sense of duty on this occasion. A Conference of Landlords of the United Provinces was hurriedly summoned to dutifully condemn "the spirit of revolution and communism gradually creeping into the country from outside," and "the adoption of the Independence creed by the Congress" as well as "its inimical attitude and propaganda against property and capital". The Princes and princelings of India were also administered an appropriate sermon on their duty to the Empire by the Viceroy at the meeting of the Chamber of Princes (February 25).

The sky was thus overcast with clouds. A veritable thunder-storm was brewing on the horizon. Flashes of lightning were racking on all sides. The circle of violence was dangerously narrowing round Mr. Gandhi's head. If he wanted to lead his "Peace Army" between the serried ranks of the opposing forces of Government and the people, he had to be up and doing. And though he had seen no suitable atmosphere for civil disobedience a few weeks ago and he had been accorded ample latitude regarding the choice of time, he now hurriedly set out to give the final dramatic touches to his plan of self-immolation and to launch with appropriate flourish of trumpets and sound of cymbals his long awaited campaign of civil disobedience.

LXXV

ULTIMATION OR APOLOGIA ?

MR. GANDHI prayed to Heaven for two months for the discovery of an "effective and innocent formula" of civil disobedience At last the clouds lifted and the Great Illumination made a timely descent on his soul towards the end of February. The great formula had been finally evolved with great travail and searching of heart—the formula which might light up a Celestial Fire in the ancient land of Bharatwarsha.

The formula was, of course, no other than that of disregarding the provisions of the Salt Act. Before, however, examining the motives of the Mahatma in the selection of this plan and its intrinsic worth, let us first review somewhat closely the letter—then hailed in the newspapers of the world as a notice or an ultimatum—which Mr. Gandhi handed over to Mr. Reynolds (a young English Quaker) for personal delivery to the Viceroy on the 2nd March 1930. For it was undoubtedly the most important political document published by Mr. Gandhi before his arrest on the 4th of the following May.

Now what was supposed to be Mr. Gandhi's duty in the matter ? Obviously the notice—or the ultimatum as one may choose to call it—was not delivered by Mr. Gandhi in his personal capacity, but as the chosen plenipotentiary of the Indian National Congress. We should, therefore, carefully remember that while the Lahore Congress followed its previous sessions held during 1920 and 1921 (Calcutta, Nagpur and Ahmedabad) in calling upon the country to "launch upon a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes whether in selected areas or otherwise and under safeguards as it may consider necessary, it so far from pinning upon individual grievances, like Punjab Khilafat or any other wrongs, specifically exhorted all Congressmen to "devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete Independence for India." It is, therefore, the relevant to consider how far Mr. Gandhi chose to adhere to the

very heart and kernel of the Lahore thesis in the so-called ultimatum that he chose to address to the representative of British authority in India.

While the Congress manifesto of January 26 deemed it necessary to devote at least one sentence to "the inalienable right of the Indian people, not to govern themselves as a sovereign Republic, but to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth," Mr. Gandhi did not deem it fit to devote a single line or even a few words to such an abstract doctrine. The biggest thing that he could get himself to deliver instead in his prefatory remark was that "I hold the British rule to be a curse," and that too only in parenthesis. For he hastened to take all sting—or pep—out of this pompous indictment by adding not only that "I do not intend to harm a single Englishman or any legitimate interest he may have in India" but also that "I do not consider Englishmen worse than any other people on earth." Which was all irrelevant stuff. The statement purporting to be issued on behalf of the Indian National Congress was really meant to sum up political facts and not moral values. On the other hand, such sentimentalities interposed in a political document only looked like so many apologies for the apparent harshness of the judgment pronounced on the British rule in India. In fact such an apologetic vein, servile and sickening, ran right through the statement from beginning to end.

And why was the British rule a curse to India? Not because it *ipso facto* connoted the wrongful and immoral usurpation of one nation on another—alien to it in every respect. Not because the edifice of the Empire in India was reared on force and fraud and continues to be maintained by the same unchristian and immoral methods. No, Mr. Gandhi, unlike the great apostles of national independence of other lands, turned a blind eye to the whole course of history. He did not hark back to 1600—when the East India Company was founded—nor to 1757—or even to 1857. For him apparently Indian politics began with Dadabhai Naoroji and the National Congress. He sought to carry on their outworn tradition—in what was supposed to be the new era—by weighing the British rule in India in commercial scales and by pronouncing an adverse judgment because he found it wanting.

"And why do I regard the British rule as a curse ? It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford. It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture and by a policy of disarmament it has degraded us spiritually".

Apparently then India would have been content to remain the brightest jewel in the British crown if only her people had not been ruined economically and "spiritually" by the "un-British" policy of some misguided administrators.

Now, this very method of measuring the ills of political serfdom by the yardstick of the shopkeeper, was clearly calculated to divest the high ideal of independence of all its life and soul. But Mr. Gandhi went on further. After betraying generations of India's heroes and heroines who had laid down their lives in the sacred name of Swadharma and Swaraj — irrespective of all material or mercantile considerations he proceeded to reduce the very Resolution of Independence adopted by the Lahore Congress—which was really the very fountain source of his authority to pen this statement—to a farce and a mockery by explaining it away in the following words:

"The Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Motilal Nehru and me but to take steps to carry out the solemn Resolution arrived at in Calcutta at its session in 1928. *But the Resolution of independence should cause no alarm if the word "Dominion Status" mentioned in your announcement had been used in its accepted sense.* For, has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen that Dominion Status is virtual independence ? What, however, I fear is that there never had been any intention of granting such Dominion Status to India in the immediate future".

Thus did Mr. Gandhi virtually tender his apology to the Viceroy for the Resolution of Independence which he was driven to support and roundly blamed him for not giving him any the slightest excuse for preventing the Congress from taking such a

seemingly precipitate decision. Then he hastened to assure the Viceroy that it was after all not so revolutionary as it appeared at first sight. Precisely as he had interpreted Dominion Status as an equivalent of Independence at the Calcutta Congress so did he now set out to reduce the connotation of Independence to that of Dominion Status.

But no sooner had Mr. Gandhi barely planted his hesitating step on the dizzy heights of such dangerous abstractions than he, as was his wont, hastened to jump into the quagmire of more familiar particularisms. In other words, having squeezed the very life out of the immortal Ideal of Independence, he now began to dissect its corpse into small fragments to use them as so many arguments for conferring "virtual independence" on India. And let us see the straws at which he clung in the course of his hurried descent and with which he strove to support the inherent and unquestioned right of the Indian people to be masters in their land.

"The Finance Member regards as a settled fact the 18 pence ratio which by a stroke of the pen drains India of a few crores...... Not only then has the land revenue to be considerably reduced but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern......Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden all the heaviest on him, because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence......The drink and drug revenue too is derived from the poor ...The tale of India's ruination is not complete without a reference to the liabilities (Public Debt) incurred in her name......"

Thus was India's right to Independence satisfactorily split up into the familiar 11 points—the points that stinked even in Pandit Jawaharlal's nostrils. Last, however, the public might be disgusted at the sickening repetition of these comparatively trivial issues, Mr. Gandhi strove to give an original touch to this recital by descending to still lower depths of particularism :

"Take your own salary. It is over 21,000 Rs. a month...... The British Prime Minister gets £5,000 per year *i.e.* over Rs. 5,000 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting Rs. 700 per day against India's average income of less than 2 annas per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against

Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninty times Britain's average income. On bended knees I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon ...But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped......"

No doubt. But so also did the psychology of the "bended knee" and of reducing the sovereign question of a nation's freedom to a few administrative reforms—however beneficial and far-reaching—deserve to be scrapped. Nor could many mountains of words placating the interest of the poor serve to conceal Mr. Gandhi's historic role as the unabashed champion of the propertied classes of India.

How was the preposterous salary of the Viceroy to be reduced and—let alone Independence—even the precious 11 points to be secured ? For once Mr. Gandhi hit the nail on the head. "It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces......India must consequently evolve a force enough to free herself from the embrace of death".

Then Mr. Gandhi dealt with the forces operating—then as now—in India. On one side were ranged the forces of the Government. "Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all forces at her command." Then there was the revolutionary party to count with. "It is common cause that however disorganised and for the time being, however insignificant it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt." But being convinced that "it cannot bring the desired relief to dumb millions," Mr. Gandhi dogmatically laid down his dictum that "nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government".

And how was even the "active force" of non-violence to be pitted against the armed forces of the Government with any chance of success ? This novel force would no doubt be "expressed through civil disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the *Satyagraha* Ashrama but ultimately designed to

cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations." But would Mr. Gandhi seek, in this wise, to lead a peaceful rebellion—or even a "national revolt" as he threatened to do on the eve of his Bardoli campaign—with the obvious intention of forcing the hand of Government? This could be done, for instance, if all India refused to pay rents and taxes to Government and Landlords alike, in a perfectly peaceful manner. No. Not at all. The sacrifice of the Innocents and the self-immolation of the thousands—or perhaps millions—were only designed "to convert the British people through non-violence and thus make them feel the wrong they have done to India." So Mr. Gandhi relied on such a mystical process of the spiritual conversion of an Imperialist nation—or to be more precise—its hard-boiled governors to secure the 11 concessions and to achieve the Independence of India.

There was thus to be no real matching of forces. While Mr. Gandhi's so-called force would help in diverting the energy and the enthusiasm of the people from really militant forms of warfare, it would not come to grips—in any sense of the term—with the forces of Government. By quietly succumbing to the intensified fury of the Government forces the Satyagrahis would seek to make a mute appeal to the voice of conscience muffled within the hard-crusted hearts of their opponents. All chances and prospects of effecting a victorious revolution—albeit of a peaceful variety—and of compelling Government to make peace with the leaders of the national revolt at the risk of its virtual extinction, were snuffed out in advance. In effect the *Satyagrahis* were exhorted by their master to invite suffering—and more suffering—to stoop to conquer. But the stooping and the suffering were a real certainty, while surrender and not conquest—material or spiritual—was their inevitable destiny.

But Mr. Gandhi must need apologise for holding out even the distant promise of emancipating India by converting "a nation that has consciously preyed upon another far more numerous, far more ancient and not less cultural than itself." The apology had to be rich and fulsome. "I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I believe I have always served them. I served them upto 1919 blindly, but when my eyes were opened and I conceived non-co-operation

the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have, in all humility, successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine it will not long remain hidden." Most certainly it did not. Why, the aftermath of every movement that he ever led—in South Africa or India—including the one he was then beginning—has made it abundantly clear to the whole world that he has served the interests of the British Empire far more effectively than those of his own people.

After the moral apologia came the foretaste of the political surrender. "If we want to sever British connection, it is because when such evils are removed the path becomes easy and the way to friendly negotiation will be open. If the British commerce with India is purified of greed you will have no difficulty in recognising our independence. I respectfully invite you then to pave the way for the immediate removal of those evils and thus open a way for a real conference between equals interested only in promoting the common good of mankind through voluntary fellowship and in arranging the terms of mutual help and commerce equally suited to both".

It would be impossible to conceive any leader of Mr. Gandhi's eminence betraying the trust reposed in him by a national organisation to this extent. The unqualified Resolution of the Lahore Congress on the Independence of India was already sought to be qualified by vague and arbitrary conditions. The purpose of the historic Resolution was apparently to be served if only the Britishers recognised the Independence of India in suitable diplomatic language, even though it might not be embodied in a concrete political constitution for an indefinite period. And this inspite of the glaring fact that Egypt still remains under the iron heel of the British armed forces and the British government even after its independence has been recognised for many years past. Finally, Mr. Gandhi offered to barter the nation's charter of freedom for a heterogeneous mass of paltry concessions. Even these miserable 11 points need not be actually granted. If only the good Viceroy would be so reasonable as to "pave the way for the immediate removal of those evils," Mr. Gandhi would fleefully scrap all the plans of his cherished campaign—into which

he was almost being rushed by forces beyond his control—and make a straight dash for London to plough the sands of the Round Table Conference !

Finally, Mr. Gandhi formulated his mock heroic plan for freeing India from the embrace of British Imperialism. "But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of the month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of the Salt laws. I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint .. It is, I know, open to you frustrate my plan by arresting me. I hope there will be tens of thousands ready in a disciplined manner to take up the work after me and in the act of disobeying the Salt Act to lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute Book".

And then the inevitable apologia in conclusion. "I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment or any, at all, so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter and you will care to discuss matters with me and to that end you would like me to postpone the publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on the receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you".

As the Viceroy replied to this "ultimation" with a two line message expressing his regret "to learn that you contemplate a course of action which is clearly bound to involve a violation of the law and a danger to public peace," Mr. Gandhi was left not even a vestige of an excuse for postponing his salt campaign. He, therefore, duly announced in the congenial atmosphere of his Ashram at prayer time on the 5th March that he would start with the first batch of volunteers early in the morning of the 12th instant on foot and that he would take only the male inmates leaving behind the women and such men as were quite necessary for the proper conduct of the Ashram.

Now, before proceeding further with the fascinating march of events that followed in the wake of this historic announcement, let us pause for a moment to dissect Mr. Gandhi's motives in fixing all attention on the Salt Act for inaugurating his campaign

of civil disobedience. One could not indeed be deemed guilty of doing any injustice to him if he chose to hark back to the precedent set by Mr. Gandhi himself during the Bardoli campaign. It is common ground that India was a sleepy hollow in 1922 as compared to its seething mass of awakened humanity—bubbling over with fanatical enthusiasm to do and die—that encompassed him in the winter of 1930. Besides the issues were much bigger. The stake was greater. One would, therefore, have expected him to fashion more radical and drastic weapons of warfare than he did almost exactly 8 years ago. We are, therefore, all the more surprised to see that so far from exceeding his own previous record he actually appeard to reduce the whole thing to a heart-rending farce. And yet he got away with it all in the eyes of the gulible multitude and even the vast majority of the intelligentsia by casting a hypnotic spell on their eyes with extraordinary stage antics.

Now there are only two species of mass activity—of an essentially peaceful and pacific variety—that could have a reasonable chance of bringing even the bureaucracy to a sense of realities; non payment of rents and taxes to dry up the resources of the Government and a general strike on all industrial concerns owned by Government—including first and foremost the railway lines and designed to cover all departments of the State. The first would be appropriately resort d to by the millions of peasants and tenants in a country like India, while the second would prove a most formidable weapon in the redoubtable arms of an organised proletariat. It is instructive to remember that the Russian revolution of 1905 began with a general strike on the State-owned Railways which presently enveloped all industrial concerns and travelled to the other end of pole when the muzhiks refused to pay kopek to their hereditary master. Mr. Gandhi was also inspired by a correct instinct in 1922 when he ordered the tax-payers of the Bardoli Taluka to "refrain, till further instructions, from paying land-revenue and other taxes due to the Government"—though as usual he faltered and fumbled in the end. Now that the working classes of India were more self-conscious and vigilant, more experienced and organised, Mr. Gandhi might have been expected to call for a simultaneous campaign of non-payment

of rents and taxes as well as a general strike on all Government undertakings. Or if he did not feel sure of leading a gigantic strike of unforeseen dimensions he might have at least picked up the threads of the no-tax movement from where he left it in 1922.

Why then did he now prefer to shift his attack from the "whole revenue system"—which, as he reminded the Viceroy, was "designed to crush the very life out of him" (the peasant)—to the comparatively minor detail of the Salt Act? The Salt tax might be deemed, speaking qualitatively, "the most iniquitous from the poor man's standpoint." But quantitively and in reality the tax that robbed the people of only a few crores could hardly be mentioned in the same breath with the other that all but deprived the hard-working peasantry of the fruits of its labour to the tune of hundreds of millions. The revenue loot snatched away the very bread without which all salt would be worthless.

Neither the political circumstances of the case nor any arguments cited in the letter provide any valid clue to his fatuous preference for the salt campaign. Obviously we must right about turn to find it.

Haven't we been witnessing the uninterrupted course of his counter-revolutionary antics since the fateful day of the suspension of the Bardoli struggle? Didn't he seek the alliance of moderates and millowners, landlords and even Princes to snuff out all politics from the supposedly premier political organisation of the country? Did he not consistently wage a relentless war not only against all activities of the armed revolutionarie but also against all the more dangerous. as it was more insidious—militant activities of the working classes? Didn't he return to the Congress at Calcutta in 1928 in time to prevent it from re-iterating inadherence to the cherished objective of complete independence even after the preceding session of 1927 had definitely adopted it and the All-India Congress Committee had logically interpreted it as involving complete separation from the British Empire? Didn't he then continue to make frantic efforts to patch up some kind of a bargain throughout the year 1929 till the repeated rebuffs given by the Viceroy

left him no alternative but to sponsor the Resolution on Independence? Hardly had the echoes of the Lahore Congress died away when he resumed his customary game of playing with words and told us that the awful looking figure of Independence was after all no other than old friend Dominion Status dressed up in a somewhat novel garb. And didn't he then seek to stem the tide of popular up-surge—even while he was rushed by it to hasten the inauguration of his much-boosted campaign—by artificially restricting it to those who believed in non-violence as an article of faith? Now, take the story a step further and you have the secret of Mr. Gandhi's new-born love of salt Satyagraha.

In plain English, he cleverly contrived the hoax of the individualistic salt campaign with the set purpose of disorganising and paralysing the ranks of the militant working classes of India in 1930 precisely as he had more honestly devised the formidable weapon of mass non-payment of land revenue with the object of disorganising and paralysing the forces of Government in 1922. Did he not repeatedly harp in the letter to the Viceroy on "the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence?" "To sit still," he wrote, would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned." Now the growing strength of the party of revoluion obviously constituted the deciding factor of the situation in the eyes of Mr. Gandhi. For 'the organised violence of the British Government" had long been a normal and an established fact in the country while it had recently begun to sharpen its claws to crush out the forces of real revolution in all its forms. Mr. Gandhi was indeed too shrewd not to realise the utter futility of dissuading any of the confirmed revolutionaries from their chosen path. Though insignificant in numbers they appeared most dangerous to Government and Mr. Gandhi alike in the burning impression which their occasional expioits and extraordinary suffering made on the romantic imaginations and the impassioned hearts of an increasing number of young and unsophisticated persons in the country. And having successfully inveigled a large number of such impressionable persons in his service by raising the slogans of Independence, Civil Disobedience and Fight to the Finish, he now set out to lead them literally to the sea to churn the sands in search of salt.

To net this vast body of impressionable young men and peasants who form the raw material of all the revolutionary movements—within the orbit of his pacifist movement—Mr. Gandhi had to appear to lead a most momentous fight against Government which would be shrewdly calculated to cause it the minimum amount of injury. Of course, a mass movement of non-payment of taxes coupled with the general campaign of civil disobedience—including "non-violent" raids on revenue offices and police barracks—would indeed have made the most thrilling appeal to the romantic imagination of the youths and the political enthusiasm of the half-starved farmers of the country. But the lesson of Chauri had been too deeply engraved on Mr. Gandhi's mind to permit him a repetition of the Bardoli tactics. They were instinctively ruled out by our saint politician as they would not only—though however indirectly—unleash the forces of violent revolution and peaceful revolt in the country but would also unchain the monster of social revolution that might seriously endanger the interests of the landlords and the money-lenders, the mill-owners and capitalists, so dear to Mr. Gandhi's heart.

Wouldn't the Salt Campaign, however, fail to arouse the enthusiasm of the youth and the nation? Wouldn't they all see through the huge farce of wielding the sledge hammer—of *Satyagraha*—to kill the fly of the Salt Act? Mr. Gandhi, therefore, proceeded to exercise all his journalistic genius and political resourcefulness to invest his campaign with a revolutionary significance and a socialist motive which it never possessed. The poor man's salt was exploited to the utmost. False and farcical hymns were concocted and sung in praise of the new deity. All else was forgotten for the moment. In the din and storm created by Mr. Gandhi and his faithful followers manufacture of illicit salt, as of legal khaddar, before, was made out as synonymous with the attainment of Swaraj.

Then there was the international standpoint that Mr. Gandhi had now in view more than ever before. A clever political artist must undoubtedly change his vestments and his stage thunder from time to time if he is to play successfully up to an international audience. Besides, how could you expect the middle and lower middle classes, the rich and the ruling classes of the

foreign nations of the world—however critical and even secretly inimical they might be to the policies of the British imperialists —to wax enthusiastic over a mass movement of non-payment of taxes and general social revolt such as, if initiated is their own country, might seriously imperil their own vested interests? Besides, Mr. Gandhi wanted something characteristically Indian about his movement. An oppressed peasantry might rebel against the exactions of Government and landlords alike any where in the world. But where else except in befogged and deluded India could you stage a salt campaign for the edification and amusement of the enlightened world?

Even so, Mr. Gandhi perceived with his unerring political acumen that a cut and dry plan of making illicit salt from well or even sea water would fall flat in the country as well as outside. The Bardoli movement of non-payment of taxes had enough political content in it not to require the extra aid of any theatrical gestures. Not so, however, with the salt campaign. While, therefore, it was good enough to proceed to Bardoli in a night train to put a match to the train of gun powder set in that area, it would not do, thought Mr. Gandhi to entrain for Dandi to reach the sea for initiating the salt movement in all India. Not only the political technique but even the method of using it had to be characteristically Indian to arrest the imagination of the public in India and abroad. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, no doubt taxed his resourcefulness to the very utmost in devising an original plan to set India and the world gaping and wondering.

A march on foot from his Ashrama near Ahmedabad to Dandi in the Surat district—a distance of about one hundred and fifty milles—through the villages of four Gujarat districts, was hit upon by Mr. Gandhi in a moment of supreme inspiration. It achieved its object by hypnotising the masses of India and interesting the shrewd people of the world.

Only the British Government in India and the British Imperialists in London were left in full possession of their sense and their power. Mr. Gandhi had not meant to do otherwise.

So then to the great march to the Sea—and nothingness!

LXXVI

MARCH TO THE SEA

ALL India began to dance to the magic tunes of the Mahatma's new flute.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Congress, naturally, chimed in by calling for the "prayers and good wishes of millions of her sons and daughters ....wishing God speed to the Soldiers of Freedom.

On the same day (March 7th) Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel offered the first sacrifice in the Holy campaign. He was sentenced to three months' simple imprisonment for delivering his speech in defiance of a Magistrate's order in Ras village in the Borsad Taluka (Gujarat). At the bidding of Mr. Gandhi the city of Ahmedabad including the mills observed complete *hartal*.

The excitement and upheavel was so general throughout the country that it rapidly travelled to the very far north. On the very eve of Mr. Gandhi's march the Congress Committees of the Punjab and the Frontier Province as well as the Shiromani Akali Dal passed Resolutions assuring the great leader of their full support to the campaign he was about to inaugurate.

On the 11th March Mr. Gandhi delivered what he called his last Message and Testament to the people of Gujarat in the course of his address to the thousands who had gathered on the banks of the Sabarmati to hear him. While he exhorted the people of Gujarat to offer general Civil Disobedience through the manufacture of salt even if he and his party were arrested before reaching their destination, he again emphasised the supreme importance of the necessary qualification of holding "absolute non-violence as an article of faith" for all who would join the battle. Secondly and secondarily he again outlined his programme of triple boycott. Thirdly and lastly he urged those who had courage—subject of course to the condition mentioned above—to refuse to pay taxes.

At last the day appointed for the great march (12th March) dawned. "Victory or death", with this as motto Mr. Gandhi

started on his journey in the morning with a batch of 79 *Satyagrahis*. Large crowds, some hundreds of thousands, had been waiting all night at the Ashrama and along the route to Ellis Bridge to have a last glimpse of the Mahatma who had taken a solemn vow not to return to his home till India was freed. Moreover, rumours of the impending arrest of Mr. Gandhi had caused a great stir in the city and the whole Province. Several places in the route were decorated with flags and Asopalava leaves. Punctually at 6-30, after morning prayers, the Mahatma, his forehead annointed with a big round mark and the dollar watch dangling from his waist band, headed the procession of his faithful band, each of whom carried a bag of belongings and a long wooden staff. At several places Mr. Gandhi was offered flowers and cocoanuts. It was all reminiscent of the march of Rajputs to the last battle or of the Satis of old to the funeral pyre of their husbands.

The Mahatma's march through the villages of Gujarat proved a veritable triumphal procession. At each of his halts he was accorded the royal welcome by thousands of men and women. His appeal for men and money elicited enthusiastic response everywhere. Several village officers and police patels resigned their posts.

While Mr. Gandhi was engaged on his long march he published his comments on the Viceroy's reply to his ultimatum in "Young India" dated 13th March. "On bended knees", wrote Mr. Gandhi, "I asked for bread and I received stone instead........ But the time is not yet. He represents the nation that does not easily relent. Entreaty never convinces it. It readily listens to physical force. It can witness with bated breaths a boxing match..... It goes into ecstasies over blood-curdling accounts of the war. It will listen also to mute resistless suffering." So dreamt Mr. Gandhi. But has it?

Resignations of village officers and Patels continued during that period, specially at places through which Mr. Gandhi was passing. In the resignations the Patels mentioned that when the Indian National Congress had declared war against the Government which exploited the economic physical and moral conditions of the people it was a crime against the country to co-operate with such a Government. And yet it was an open secret that many of these

village officers and Patels withdrew their resignations no sooner Mr. Gandhi had marched a few miles out of their villages.

Matters were evidently not going to end with barren marches or fitful resignations. People everywhere seriously took to their hearts the slogan of "Fight to the Finish" which Mr. Gandhi had uttered so often during the march. They were determined to fight it out against Government—peacefully if possible and with violence if necessary. The revolutionary spirit which Mr. Gandhi had sought to chain with silken cords of love and peace, began to bubble forth in sporadic scuffles and skirmishes with the police—which not unoften developed into serious fights and riots.

The first of such riots happened to be staged in far off Rangoon on the 19th March when Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta was being tried on a charge of sedition. There was a serious clash between the police and the large crowd which was waiting outside the court room. Several people on either side were injured. There was an exchange of brick bats and the military was requisitioned to disperse the crowd.

Thus was the movement destined to escape at many points from the severe limltations within which Mr. Gandhi had designed to throttle it. And it was truly remarked by Mr. Vithalbhai Pate later on that the whole campaign of 1930-31 succeeded only to the extent to which it swerved from the path chalked out for it by Mr. Gandhi.

On the 21st March the All-India Congress Committee met at Ahmedabad in solemn conclave to ponder over the situation in the country. It need hardly be added that it passed a Resolution approving of the decision of the Working Committee authorising Mr. Gandhi to initiate and control Civil Disobedience. It further authorised the Provincial Congress Committees "to organise and undertake such Civil Disobedience as to them may seem proper and in a manner that may appear to them to be the most suitable." Lest, however, any Provincial Committees might choose to switch off altogether to more radical and militant movements the All-India Committee asked the Provinces to concentrate in the first instance on the civil breach of Salt Laws.

On 23rd March the youths of Gujarat met in Conference at Surat under the Presidentship of Mr. K. F. Nariman. Thundering

revolutionary speeches were delivered by the President, Mrs. Kamladevi Chattopadayaya, Mr. Meher Ally and others at the Conference which, however, degenerated into an unconscious farce when after passing a vote of appreciation of the self-immolation of Jatin Das, it decided to achieve the independence of India by the simple process of making salt out of mud or saltish water!

While the Government felt a certain amount of nervousness over the distant and unforeseen consequences of the new movement and kept its powder dry to meet all eventualities, it was obivously pleased to see Mr. Gandhi diverting the whole current of popular turbulence into perfectly harmless channels. For once the Viceroy was right when he waxed eloquent on "the barren task of devising means to break the laws" (principally the Salt Laws) in the course of his address to the All-India Shia Conference at Delhi. He also deplored the Gandhian doctrine that "the country can reach its rightful destiny only through agony and convulsion in the name of non-violence." Of course, he was gratified to note in his own mind that the agony and convulsion were to be the lot of the Indian and not of the Britisher. For had not Mr. Gandhi admonished his followers at the very start of the holy campaign not to shed any blood and not to break any bones or heads except their own?

Nor did the workers' movement remain out of the picture even while Mr. Gandhi was nearing the cherished goal of his pilgrimage. Seven men were killed and eighty injured including several policemen during the carters' strike at Calcutta when they adopted the novel way of obstructing the traffic by leaving their carts on the streets and themselves crowding on the footpaths in the most congested parts of the city. "Individual firing was ordered by the police", stated an official report, "after due warning on four or five occasions in order to disperse the crowd." The whole trouble arose in connection with the new rules that had been imposed on the carters regarding the buffalo driven vehicles in Calcutta

As last Mr. Gandhi reached Navasari (3rd April), the last great town on his journey to Dandi. In course of his speech Mr. Gandhi said to an admiring audience: "Either I shall return with what I want or my dead body will float in the ocean". Knowing full well of course that whatever else he might get he

certainly did not hope to get independence by making a few handfuls of salt and that he could not possibly run the risk of death in the course of his puerile salt activity.

It was also at Navasari that Mr. Gandhi made an appeal to the Parsees to give up liquor traffic and exhorted the women to take up the work of total abstinence. There was more behind this than appeared on the surface. It might be recalled that Mr. Gandhi had arbitrarily forbidden women from taking part in the salt march or in any other salt-activity. And as the echoes of Mr. Gandhi's triumphal march resounded throughout the land and the tempo of popular enthusiasm and excitement reached its high watermark the women leaders not only of Gujarat but Bombay and other parts of the country nearly overwhelmed Mr. Gandhi with urgent inquiries as to the women's specific task in the new movement. Worried and perplexed by these urgent appeals Mr. Gandhi convened an urgent meeting of women leaders at Navasari when Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Mrs. Hansa Mehta, Miss Mithu Ben Petit and other leading ladies of Gujarat were present. Mr. Gandhi was apparently seriously apprehensive that, women's participation in the Salt campaign might precipitate a serious crisis—an event that he now as before deliberately sought to avoid. He, therefore, hurriedly evolved and authoritatively preached a special technique for the women of India. He exhorted them to devote themselves exclusively to the prohibition of intoxicating drinks and the complete boycott of all Foreign cloth. Persuade, if possible, all sellers and buyers of intoxicating drinks and foreign cloth to give up their dealings in these unholy goods and picket if necessary—albeit in a prayerful and peaceful manner—the liquor booths and foreign cloth shops—this was the great message delivered by Mr. Gandhi to the women of India during the last lap of his march to the sea.

It was in pursuance of this solemn decision that Mrs. Hansa Mehta issued on behalf of the Women's Provisional Committee—which was presently expanded into the Desh Seviki Sangha—a passionate appeal to the following effect: "Wanted 2,500 women volunteers for picketing liquor shops in the city of Bombay. The 500 liquor shops in Bombay require at the rate of 4 women in two shifts of 2 hours each 2000 women for regular picketing—500 more are wanted by way of reserve.........College students are particularly requested to send their names in at once".

Men laughed in their sleeves as they read this appeal. Where would they get even 50 Hindu married women—(for most of them were married young, Muslim women were veiled and Parsees were not sympathetic) or widows to stand in broad daylight for long hours before drink shops in Kamateepura or Manchester cloth shops in Mulji Jetha market and calmly put up with the vulgar jokes of the drunkards or the icy satires of the well-to-do folk? Such cynics were, however, left gaping in surprise when 500 ladies—married, unmarried and widows—and even including a not insignificant sprinkling of Parsee and Muslim women—were enrolled within a few weeks in the new organisation and thousands rolled in a few months. And as all India did to-morrow what Bombay did to-day. Women's Sanghs bloomed forth almost overnight in all the Provinces—even in Parada-ridden towns like Delhi and Allahabad, Calcutta and Dacca and presently began to vie with the men's Volunteer bands in sharing the honours of the non-violent war against Government.

With this diversion, let us once again turn our eyes to Mr. Gandhi as he, tired and almost sick, reached his journey's end on 5th April. Interviewed by the Associated Press on his arrival at Dandi, he stressed the importance of the next day—6th April—as a day of penance and purification and exhorted the nation to inaugurate the celebration of the national week by fasting and prayer. But, of course, he had not travelled all the way from Sabarmati to Dandi on foot to fast and pray. Indeed, he had ingeniously arranged his whole time-table of the long marching in such a manner as to enable him to storm the imagination of the whole of India and the world by launching his salt campaign on the day and during the week that had been burned deep in the heart of the nation by the thrilling events of 1919.

Then lo and behold! came the great deed. Exactly at 8-30 a. m. on 6th April Mr. Gandhi and his band of the faithful, broke the Salt Act by picking out small lumps of natural salt from a pit in the sea-beach. Thousands were there to witness the ceremony. After committing such a technical breach of the Salt Law he issued a statement intimating that everyone who would take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law could manufacture salt wherever he wished and whenever it was convenient to him.

Did Mr. Gandhi then suddenly decide to permit everybody who was prepared to take the political risk to break the Salt Act irrespertive of his belief in non-violence as an article of faith, or as a matter of expediency? Didn't he now require all the would-be civil resisters to don the livery of snowwhite khaddar, and to purify their hearts of the sin of untouchability? Under the stress of the supreme political emergency Mr. Gandhi evidently chose to leave it all vague for the moment. And it is not perhaps wide of the mark to say that he was practically compelled by the rising tide of revolutionary enthusiasm that he saw sweeping over the land on all sides to dispense with the sanctimonious conditions he had imposed on the eager volunteers in his cooler moments and to order a general mobilisation of the forces of civil disobedience throughout the land.

It is instructive, however, to note that the Provincial and Local Congress leaders had decided—even before Mr. Gandhi's fresh fiat could possibly reach them—to inaugurate a simultaneous campaign of Salt *Satyagraha* on the 6th April. In Bombay and Viramgam (Gujarat), in Allahabad and in Contai (Bengal), parties of Congress Volunteers signallised the historic day by breaking the Salt Act and courting the penalties of law. Arrests and imprisonments followed in quick succession.

But Mr. Gandhi himself was not touched by Government. He was considerably embarrassed to see that he, the arch culprit, remained immune from arrest and punishment, while hundreds of his followers all over the country were pounced upon by the police and locked up behind the bars. Nay more. The Congress volunteers in his own area began to be beaten by the police, who did not hesitate to use any degree of force in trying to literally wrench illicit salt from their possession. This was again a new development which Mr. Gandhi had not contemplated before. Faced by the new emergency Mr. Gandhi had, of course, no alternative but to exhort the volunteers to stiffen their resistance against the attacks of the police—if only with a view to hasten the day of his own incarceration. Addressing a large number of men and women who assembled at a neighbouring village (Att) on the 8th April, Mr. Gandhi said that they should lay down their lives before parting with the salt. He added that if their fist was the fist of a *Satyagrahi* (for it was in squeezing open the fists of the volunteers in which they tightly

held the illicit salt that the police made their most bitter attacks on them) with the strength of God in it, it could not be opened. He concluded by exhorting everyone to collect, distribute and use the salt, and he hoped that their example would be followed all over Gujarat.

Thus was the royal road to Salt *Satyagraha*, formerly hedged in by so many complicated restrictions, now thrown open to all and sundry by the Mahatma. But once again it was abundantly proved that in appearing to lead the vast mass movement he was really trying to catch on to the tail of the marching millions. For "inspite of the absence of elaborate preparation and organisation," writes Mr. Ezekiel in his book on "Swaraj or Surrender," "inspite of all the precautions taken by Gandhi to prevent Mass Civil Disobedience, inspite of stern orders to the nation not to do anything till he saw how the plan worked out in his case, there was a spontaneous outburst of law-breaking all over the land. Men who had never worried themselves about politics, clerks from their desks, stenographers from their machines, lawyers and doctors, men from field and factory, children with satchels in their hands and women who tore away from their age-long domestic instincts—all burst into a frenzy for salt manufacture. It was at once an encouraging and a tragic sight. It was encouraging because it revealed how strong and deep were the anti-imperialist revolutionary forces. It was tragic because these forces were wasted in such an appalling manner on such a trivial issue as the Salt Law, whose breach expressed no class conscious and possessed no anti-imperialist possibilities".

Scuffles—long, arduous and sometimes violent—between the volunteers and the police, mass arrests followed by imprisonments for varying terms from a few months to two years and more followed in rapid succession. Strangely enough, however, Mr. Gandhi, the leader of them all, still remained untouched. Nor was he honoured by Government even with any order or notice seeking to restrict either his movements or his freedom of speech. His embarrassment was indeed complete. He felt almost ashamed and bewildered. He did not know which way to turn—whether to dive deeper into the villages in the area of his choice and to inculcate spiritual and moral ideals about non-violence and temperance, khaddar and untouchability in the hearts of the simple village folk,

or to take rapid strides from one city to another with a view to speed up the nation's march to political freedom. In his anxiety to ensure full national response to his novel doctrine of Salt *Satyagraha* he had hurried almost at the very start to summon the whole nation to the field of battle. But no sooner had the nation begun its triumphant march in response to his trumpet call—or even in advance of it—Mr. Gandhi as before was caught in the never-ending whirlpool of subjective doubts and fears. His joy and pride over the unexpected tempo of national response proved short-lived and illusory. For his more sanctimonious friends and followers all over the country began to instil in his wavering mind all kinds of doubts and anxieties about the true nature of the historic events.

Are all the hundreds and thousands of volunteers marching to the seas and otherwise manufacturing illicit salt, dressed truly and really in hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar from head to foot? Are they one and all rid of the sin of untouchability and actually prepared to fraternise with the pariahs and the Bhangis? Are all these heroes and martyrs pledged not to touch any intoxicating drugs or drinks, and to the vow of life-long temperance? Do they above all believe in non-violence, not merely as a matter of political expediency but as an article of subjective faith, so that they could face the attack of the police—however brutal and relentless—without harbouring the slightest feelings of hatred and resentment in their hearts? His private reporters told him that most of the volunteers who cheerfully faced arrests and imprisonments in a disciplined manner could easily be found guilty on any or all of these charges. All was not well, he therefore concluded in his mind, with the movement that gave front-page news to the newspapers of the world and dazzled the eyes of millions abroad.

And yet how could he be left in the unrestricted enjoyment of his freedom—which now proved every minute more burdensome and embarrassing to his soul than incarceration in a jail cell—find fault with the thousands of men and women, young and old, who marched out to manufacture salt day after day in face of increasing police terror, who cheerfully bore the blows of the police and endured the squeezing of their fists and the twisting of their arms to save miserable quantities of worthless salt from the paws of their enemies, and who faced their trials in courts and disappeared

behind the prison gates with a smile on their lips and a song in their hearts ? Faced by the most thrilling and dynamic events in the recent annals of India, Mr. Gandhi remained literally at sea. Surprised and embarrassed at the action of Government in keeping him free while clapping his immediate followers—like Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in Allahabad, Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta in Calcutta. Mr. Nariman in Bombay—Mr. Gandhi continued to stagnate in the village area round Dandi in a state of semi-paralysis. For four long weeks—from the 6th of April when he reached his journey's end to the 5th of May when he was arrested by Government—he, who had given the clarion call for a mass movement against the biggest Empire on earth, was apparently so dumb-founded at the resurgence of the mass movement which he appeared to lead, that he could only seek his salvation by retiring deeper into his shell and stewing in his own juice. No doubt, he indulged in long winded yarns on temperance and untouchability, and even went to the length of diverting mass energy in the neighbouring villages to the still more barren activity of cutting off date and palm trees on a large scale so as to render the production of the Tadi drink impossible in the future. Shall we call it subjectivist spirituality in excelsis, or wilful blindness at the most stupendous march of events, thundering on his ears from all sides ? Or did he mean to nip the movement which he was supposed to have inaugurated in the very bud, with a view to mark time and open fresh negotiations in time with the British Government ?

Unmindful, however, of these reactionary meanderings of their great leader, the militant youth and workers all over the country, in their desperate determination to fight the battle to a finish, began to evolve a new terminology and to fashion new organisations with a view to speed up the tempo of the non-violent war against Government, Bombay and Calcutta, the two most dynamic centres, naturally took the lead in the matter. It was undoubtedly under the inspiring leadership of the Youth League workers of Bombay, who rushed into the breach in the Provincial Congress Committee caused by the arrest of Mr. Nariman and others, that a small Executive Committee armed with complete dictatorial power was for the first time launched out under the fiery title of the Bombay War Council. So was the *Satyagrahi* volunteer corps re-named the Bombay National Militia. The overwhelming pressure of the same pulsating events inspired the Bengal workers to organise the Bengal

National Militia. Military Music bands and martial songs became the order of the day.

The new martial terminology heralded novel manœuvres and new heroics. The new mettle of the Bombay Congress workers was put to a severe test when a police party comprised of thirty officers armed with revolvers and two hundred policemen swooped down on the Congress house on the 10th of April. The War Council had erected salt pans in two places. One set was on the terrace, and the other was in the courtyard. When the police, after first destroying the salt pans on the terrace, sought to attack the pans in the courtyard, they found their way blocked by Mrs. Perin Captain (grand-daughter of the late Dadabhai Naoroji) and six other lady volunteers of the newly organised Women's militant movement. A band of fifty volunteers linked their hands together to form a double chain round the salt pans. A long scuffle ensued between the volunteers and the police. After some time the superintendent of police ordered a mass attack on the volunteers, who bared their bosoms to receive the blows. The police finally began to pull the volunteers by their legs. When some fell down after strenuous resistance they were belaboured by the police. In the melee four volunteers were severely injured. The police then cried halt and arrested Messrs. Meherally, Abidali and Saddick, and marched off with their prisoners to the tune of national songs sung by lady volunteers.

Distant Bengal gave a proof of its militant spirit on the very next day. For the Bengal National Militia organised a big meeting for the purpose of distributing and reading out extracts from the literature declared to be prescribed by Government. The Calcutta police, mostly Europeans, attacked the unarmed, peaceful, non-violent assemblage with metal knobbed bamboo staves, which were very soon rendered famous all over India under the general name of *lathis*. About forty students were arrested.

Unprecedented scenes of enthusiasm were witnessed in Bombay on the 13th April as the result of an edict of the Bombay War Council calling for city-wide demonstrations against the Salt Law. About a hundred thousand citizens were present on the Chowpati sands in the evening to witness the throwing of an effigy of the Salt Law into the sea to mark the non-existence of the Government

salt monopoly as well as to wind up the celebration of the national week.

Madras on the same day broke the Salt Law on the Triplicane Beach under the leadership of Mr. Parkasham. Mr. Parkasham was arrested, but was released after two hours' detention.

The same historic day, however, took its biggest toll in Allahabad where Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Congress, was arrested and hurriedly sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Mr. Sen Gupta was sentenced for a similar term on charges of sedition and conspiracy. All India observed complete *hartal* as a mark of protest against the conviction of the two leaders.

The 14th of April witnessed a heavy crop of arrests all over the country.

The City of Poona was caught in the whirlpools of unprecedented excitement on the 15th April on account of the *hartal* in connection with the Congress President's conviction. A crowd of about 500 burned foreign caps and distributed Gandhi caps in the morning. In the afternoon there were demonstrations outside the police headquarters. As the police emerged to clear the streets a heavy shower of large stones rained on them. The police made several baton charges to clear the streets.

Calcutta went on further on the same day. Two tram cars were burnt and a cart wrecked by a large mob with the obvious object of enforcing the *hartal* which was being observed as a protest against the arrest and conviction of Pt. Nehru and Mr. Sen Gupta. Members of the Fire Brigade who came upon the scene to extinguish the flames were attacked by the crowd. An European Sergeant opened fire in defence of a brother officer who had been wounded by some Sikhs. In North Calcutta students held up tram cars and cut off the trolly ropes. The inevitable *Lathi* charge followed. The city was in a veritable state of siege. Military forces were fully mobilised and armoured cars were in evidence in the streets. Still all business was brought to a standstill and all schools and colleges remained closed.

Karachi was duly baptised with the blood of its martyrs on the 10th April. A big crowd of about 20,000 smashed every window

of the court house as a protest against the mock trial of Dr. Choitram and six other leaders. Revolutionary slogans filled the air in and outside the courthouse. The trial had to be adjourned. And the police fired at the crowd to disperse it.

Such popular uprisings and Government reprisals rendered it impossible for Mr. Gandhi to hold his tongue any longer. Wouldn't he beat a hasty retreat, now that the milk-white purity of his holy campaign had been sullied by the violence of unruly mobs? No. He had himself fore-sworn it from the commencement, if only because his camp followers would not hear of it. "If non-violence has to fight the people's violence," wrote Mr. Gandhi on the 17th April, "in addition to the violence of the Government, it must still perform its arduous task at any cost. I see no escape from it." With special reference to the riots in Calcutta and Karachi he had now no difficulty in stating most emphatically—as he could have always done before but didn't—that Government had themselves provoked the people by prohibiting public meetings and processions altogether and by arresting influential leaders known to be partial to non-violence.

Did his faith then burn bright and clear in his heart? Did he even now mean to prosecute his fight seriously throughout the length and breadth of the country? Would he not then travel far and wide—as he had done in 1919 and 1921—to re-inforce the faith, direct the intelligence and guide the footsteps of his local captains in Bombay and Calcutta, Lahore and Madras? Let us see.

It was during this period—when Mr. Gandhi was still left free by Government—that the Congress leaders of Bombay once again appealed to him to pay a visit, however brief, to their town. Nothing could be more salutory or opportune. For hadn't Mr. Gandhi said so often, "What Bombay did to-day all India did to-morrow?" It was also well-known that the term of Mr. Gandhi's freedom was short and precarious. Here then was a chance offered to him during the most difficult stage of his campaign to guide and inspire the beardless youth who had rushed into the gap left by the lightning arrests of the first few weeks. Besides Bombay was hardly one hundred and some odd miles away from the village area in which he had chosen so fatuously to bury himself. Yet he replied to this invitation neither with a clear-cut Yes nor a clear-cut No. Instead,

he sent a conditional reply. He would gladly come to Bombay, he stated, to lead the movement personally if only he was assured that one hundred thousand spinning-wheels had been set going in that town.

Now, surely, Mr. Gandhi could not have it both ways. If it was not right to embark on a general campaign of Salt *Satyagraha* without fulfilling uncautiously all the elaborate conditions regarding khaddar, untouchability etc. he should have said so at the very start. Having on the contrary, called upon all who would take the risk of prosecution to manufacture salt at the time and place of their choice, he could not find fault with Bombay for zealously carrying on the good fight according to its lights. If then the Bombay workers had done well Mr. Gandhi should have gone there to chalk out the future plan. If they had, however, erred in any manner he should have still gone there to set them on the right path. But it was indeed the height of impudent opportunism to damn the glorious effort of Bombay with faint praise from afar and to deprive his zealous lieutenants of his inspiration and counsel in the hour of their greatest need.

The fact of the matter was that every day of the widening curve and the rising tempo of his movement left Mr. Gandhi floundering deeper in the mire of his subjective doubts and difficulties. He did not know whether to laugh over his success or to weep over the shortcomings of the movement. Politically, it was all going well indeed. Not so, however, from his self-conceived spiritual standpoint. And the fundamental divergence that had always sharply cut him off from his intellectual colleagues and the general masses right from the early days of 1919 left him practically benumbed at this most critical stage of his struggle. Breaking through the artificial barriers he had sought to impose on it, the irresistible current of mass uprising was sweeping over the land. He saw the utter impossiblity of stemming the tide within any preconceived narrow limits. He could react to it in only one wise to the movement that cared no more for his blessings and would not brook his control. The higher it rose to its historical levels, the deeper Mr. Gandhi dived in the jungle of his sanctimonious speculations, the louder he proclaimed his meaningless platitudes and more plaintively and pathetically he prayed for his deliverance from the political impasse through the massive protals of a British jail.

LXXVII

CRIMINAL FUTILITIES

BY this time Mr. Gandhi knew that the days of his political freedom were numbered. His sands were running out. The massive portals of the inevitable jail were drawing nearer in view. One should, therefore, have expected that he would at this eleventh hour at any rate have made a supreme effort to lead the national movement to more heroic and revolutionary levels. I have to record instead that to his lasting shame he strove with might and main to divert it, while there was yet time, along futile and suicidal channels.

For instance, he had exhorted the women of India at the very beginning of the month (April, 1930) to restrict themselves to the double boycott of all intoxicating liquors and foreign cloth. As we have already seen, the boycott activity was enthusiastically welcomed by the young women foik who were by this time organised in strong Sanghs and Societies in the chief cities of India. The women, however, were largely inspired with an intense political enthusiasm of destroying the edifice of the British Government. While Mr. Gandhi was obviously most deeply interested in the normal and economic aspects of the moment. And as a few week's experience brought home to the militant women leaders the urgent necessity of concentrating their attention on one definite item to achieve demonstrable success, the strange thing happened that they decided to launch a frontal attack on the whole trade in British clothing in Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere, while the Mahatma supinely directed the picketing of a few liquor shops in a small area of the Surat district.

The newspapers brought this contrast inadvertently into sharp relief when it sampled out, for instance, the following news items (17th April): Intensive picketing was started almost everywhere to boycott foreign, mostly British clothes, cigarettes and intoxicating liquors. In Bombay 200 volunteers secured

six donkeys, decked them in British clothes, hats and all, and dividing them in three batches paraded the prominent thoroughfares exhorting all to discard British clothes. The Automobile Dealers of Delhi boycotted rubber products and accessories of British firms. The piecegoods dealers of Bombay decided not to indent any foreign cloth for a year to come. Women volunteers from the Sabarmati Ashram under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership commenced picketing of liquor shops in Jalalpur.

It is thus quite clear that while the general boycott movement was being driven, under the irrepressible pressure of mass awakening along political channels and being directed against an ever increasing number of British articles of trade, Mr. Gandhi not content with restricting it to the trade in all intoxicants, foreign and Indian alike, was contemplating a novel drive with a view to rid the village people in his area of the drink habit for all time. For it was during this period of his voluntary stagnation that he ingeniously exhorted the village folk to lop off the vast forests of the most precious Toddy trees so as to render it impossible for them to tap the frothy juice which had formed the staple intoxicant of the people in that area for generations past. Mr. Gandhi indeed appeared to succeed with his criminal plan for some time. The accidental death of a spirited lad while engaged in cutting a toddy-tree, was hailed by Mr. Gandhi as martyrdom in a great cause. The mania of toddy-cutting raged in the district for some time. The owners of several gardens and plantations solemnly promised to fell all palm trees in their areas. All commonsense was, however, not blotted out of the minds of the large majority of the people who stubbornly refused to carry out this most foolish and suicidal of all the Mahatma's gospels. And even the most enthusiastic converts to the new creed were soon disappointed to discover the sheer impossibility of uprooting (for mere lopping would leave room for fresh growth) the innumerable palms and toddy trees which were rightly prized as the most priceless heritage by the people.

While Mr. Gandhi was thus fiddling away with such fatuous futilites, he was overtaken by a veritable thunderclap. Imagine then Mr. Gandhi's mortification, at seeing a most staggering blaze of the very forces of revolutionary violence which he had set out to combat by embarking on his mock heroic campaign. For the

Chittagong Armoury Raid, which took place on April 17-18, has been described even by the Government counsel as the most astounding and successful act of the Indian revolutionary party in modern times. The "Free Press" correspondent of Chittagong summarised the incidents of the raid on the night of 18th April as follows :—

"Consternation was created in the town last night by simultaneous raids organised by a large band believed to be young men. The raiders cut off the telephone exchange connecting Calcutta and Dacca and removed the rail lines between Dhoom and Jerjajganj causing derailment of a goods train which blocked the whole line. Another band attacked the officer-in charge of the Assam Bengal Railway Headquarters, instantly shot him dead and smashed his head by the butt end of guns. The band then set fire to the rooms, it is believed, removed the rifles and ammunition. Another band shot dead the sentries posted at the Police Reserve, took away a stated number of guns and ammunition and set fire to the magazine rooms which were destroyed. A large number of guns are said to have been smashed and broken by iron hammers. On receiving information, the District Magistrate immediately dashed to the scene, but while proceeding he was attacked by the raiders in his car............Several wounded people are in hospitals...... The next morning the sound of incessant firing of machine guns was heard......The raiders made good their escape and no traces of their whereabouts have yet been found......Several arrests have been made including a person with a burnt face and other injuries".

The inevitable Bengal Ordinance followed on the 19th April. Mass searches and arrests, accompanied sometimes by skirmishes between the rebels and the Police, followed in quick succession.

Meanwhile this resurgence of revolutionary activity was matched by the evolution of mass civil disobedience—such as had not been witnessed in the whole history of Mr. Gandhi's campaigns before. On April 21 the men and women of Karachi proceeded in their thousands to the Bath Islands to offer civil disobedience which Mr. Gandhi had always striven to restrict to selected volunteers specially qualified by their unswerving belief in

non-violence—as an article of faith—and their habitual use of khadder. Ten thousand maunds of salt were victoriously brought to Karachi and enthusiastically sold in the streets in face of police terror. The new weapon of mass civil disobedience so successfully wielded in Karachi was speedily adopted by the militant leaders and masses of other cities. Mass raids on natural deposits of salt and Government salt depots became very soon the most militant features of the new movement.

Once again Mr. Gandhi did not know whether to bless the new development or to denounce it. Much as he would have liked to put it down he realised his utter impotence to do so in face of the temper of the country. We find him, therefore, so late as the 23rd April just quixotically riding his hobby horse of temperance and appealing to the people of Adaoli to fell all palm trees in their gardens.

Government, however, unlike Gandhi, could not afford any longer to bury its head like an ostrich in sands. The lessons of Calcutta and Karachi having obviously failed of their purpose Government selected North India as usual to strike terror in the hearts of the people.

Early on the morning of the 23rd April some political leaders were arrested, taken through the streets of Peshawar and safely lodged in the thana. The arrests no doubt agitated the townfolk and large crowds began to march in peaceful procession through the town. In its desperate anxiety to suppress all agitation Government ordered armoured cars which ruthlessly crushed down several persons during its passage through the streets. Popular excitement naturally increased and more demonstrations followed. Troops were called out at once without rhyme or reason and peaceful demonstrators were mercilessly mown down. By the evening martial law was declared to suppress all exhibitions of public indignation.

Two days later Mr. V. J. Patel tendered his resignation of the Presidentship and membership of the Legislative Assembly to enable him to join his countrymen in a movement for freedom. And though the military terrorism just enacted in Peshawar was dot directly referred to by Mr. Patel in his letter of resignation one can hardly doubt that it had a considerable share in

doubt that it had a considerable share in precipitating his decision on a subject that had been no doubt agitating his mind since the resignation of the Swarajist members from the Assembly.

After referring at length to the difficulties and obstacles placed in his way by "a clique of underlings" and the Congress boycott of Councils, Mr. Patel referred to his place in the political struggle in the following moving words:—

> "My people have been engaged in a life and death struggle for freedom. The movement of Non-violent, Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience initiated by the Indian National Congress......is in full swing. Hundreds of prominent countrymen of mine have already found their place in His Majesty's jails. Thousands are prepared to lay down their lives, if necessary, and hundreds of thousands are ready to court imprisonment in the prosecution of that great movement. At such a juncture in the history of the struggle for the freedom of my country, my proper place is with my countrymen with whom I have decided to stand shoulder to shoulder, and not in the Chair of the Assembly".

Mr. Patel immediately started on a triumphal tour of the whole country, and was very soon commissioned by the Congress Committee, to enquire into the Peshawar atrocities.

Meanwhile the worsening nature of official terrorism, and the higher tempo of popular resistance, compelled Mr. Gandhi at long last to propose a belated forward move that apparently suggested a direct conflict between the armed forces of government and the unarmed masses of the people. On April 26, Gandhi unfolded at a meeting in Bulsar Taluka his plan for raiding the Government Salt Depot at Dharasana within a few days. "*He invited the men present at the meeting to accompany him dressed in khaddar and after giving up the drink habit. He further threatened to practice Satyagraha against them if they accompanied him without fulfilling these conditions*".

The new proposal was, of course, applauded throughout the country as the most militant creation of Mr. Gandhi's revolutionary enthusiasm. In fact, however, Mr. Gandhi made one last bid

to chain the forces of mass revolt, which were in evidence on all sides, within safe and narrow limits.

He was surely not unmindful of Chittagong. In his letter of ultimatum to the Government a few months ago he had expressed his set determination to combat all forces of popular violence. He now saw to this bitter chagrin that the revolutionary youth of Bengal were determined to fight along their own lines unmindful of the spiritual utopias sketched out before them with the Mahatma's vivid pen. But even they and the like of them in other Provinces might yet be baited, shrewdly thought Mr. Gandhi, with more martial words and new battle-cries. Those that set out to risk life and limb in raiding Government arsenals might perhaps be induced to join a more openly applauded and less risky raid on Government Salt Depots.

Then again, whether he liked them or not, these raids had already been evolved as a natural corollary of the Salt *Satyagraha* Movement in big cities like Karachi and Bombay. In fact, thousands had already raided salt depots without waiting for the orders of Mr. Gandhi, and victoriously carried away thousands of maunds of salt. The high priest of the whole movement felt naturally ashamed and crestfallen at appearing to lag behind his own movement. He had thus no option left but to catch at its tail before it slipped from his hands altogether.

But if he woke himself from his erstwhile dreams of wholesale palm cutting and liquor picketing to place himself again in living contact with the Salt movement raging throughout the country, he would do it with the set purpose of placing stern and impossible conditions on its future career. He, at any rate, would not allow all and sundry—as they might do in Bombay or Karachi—to raid salt depots. He would not allow such indiscriminate mass civil disobedience. He would once again bring the movement within the narrow limitations of individual civil disobedience by weighing in fine scales the individual fitness of each one of the volunteers to join the great crusade. It was not enough that the raiders braved the lathis of the police, and even the bayonets of the soldiers, without resistance or retaliation. What was even more necessary was that they were dressed in khaddar and abstained from all intoxicating drinks.

So we see again how Mr. Gandhi tried to impose his sanctimo nious and moral restrictions on the course of a movement which was essentially political and which had aroused such far-reaching enthusiasm everywhere. In other words, his bombastic afforded one more instance of the inherent contradiction between his self conceited spiritual subjectivism and the practical and political ideology of the vast masses in the country.

Last but not least Mr. Gandhi decided to hasten the day of his incarceration by announcing his forthcoming raid on Government salt works. The burden of his pain and mortification weighed more heavily every day on his sensitive heart as he saw his rank and file volunteers being mercilessly beaten and tortured, wounded and even killed, and his immediate lieutenants being clapped in jails everywhere while he was permitted to do his worst in the interior of a district. The hour had struck, he thought, for him to wear the crown of thorns. He decided to force the hands of the vacillating authorities by publishing his salt raid plan. And his heart's desire was soon fulfilled.

On April 27 the police charged with lathis on big crowds in Madras and then opened fire. Three were shot dead and ten were removed to the hospital with gunshot wounds, while many more received lathi blows and bayonet wounds.

On the same day the Viceroy issued the press ordinance "to provide for the better control of the press to come into force from this day." Needless to say the ordinance was immediately applied with the utmost rigour to muzzle the press.

The last days of April witnessed the imprisonment of Kaka Kalekar and C. Rajagopalachariar—both of them hundred percent theoretical exponents of Mr. Gandhi's great gospel.

Government finally pounced on Mr. Gandhi on the 4th of May. He was arrested after midnight in his camp at Karadi under Regulation 25, of 1827, and was taken straight away to Poona to be lodged once again in the Yerawada Jail.

Before proceeding with the further march of events—which can best be dealt with in a subsequent chapter—let us refer, however briefly, to the crowning futility of Mr. Gandhi's political testament to the nation which he issued in the form of his second

letter to the Viceroy and which remained the last authentic record of his views till he was released from the jail in the beginning of the next year.

He naturally began by announcing his decision "to set out for Dharsana and reach there with my companions and demand possession of the salt work." He then described the course of Government atrocities which had been directed with special brutality against the "the rank and file." "In Karachi, Peshawar and Madras firing would appear to have been unprovoked and unnecessary." Government propaganda on the incidence of Salt Duty and Public Debt as well as the "veiled form of martial law" and the press ordinance imposed by Government were denounced by Mr. Gandhi in indignant terms.

"Before then the reign of terrorism that has just begun overwhelms India," wrote Mr. Gandhi explaining his salt raid plan, "I feel I must take a bolder step, and if possible divert your wrath in a cleaner if more drastic channel.........I feel that it would be cowardly on my part not to invite you to disclose to the full the leonine paws of authority, so that people that are suffering tortures and the destruction of their property may not feel that I who had, perhaps, been the chief party inspiring them to action that has brought to light the Government in its true colours, had left any stone unturned to work out the *Satyagraha* programme as fully as it was possible under the given circumstances".

Thus did Mr. Gandhi admit how he had been goaded to take this forward step with a view to draw on himself some of the Government fury that was raining death and pain on thousands of his chosen followers.

He further confessed that his projected march on Government Salt Works was also designed to check the forces of popular violence, which had burst out sporadically in some areas. "I know the dangers attending upon the methods adopted by me. The country is not likely to mistake my meaning. I say......and repeat now that the only way to conquer violence is through non-violence pure and undefiled......If inspite of such repeated warnings people will resort to violence, I must disown responsibility, save such as inevitably attaches to a human being for the acts of every other human being. But the question of responsibility apart. I dare

not postpone action on any cause whatsoever if non-violence is a force as the seers of the world would have proclaimed it to be, and if I am not to believe my own extensive experience of its working".

Mark the words "I dare not postpone action." Thus we have it from Mr. Gandhi's own pen once again how the new plan, so far from being the fruit of his free political judgment, had been virtually forced on him by the fear of even greater outbreaks of violence than had been witnessed during the last few weeks. It might also be remembered that Mr. Gandhi had used nearly the same language in his letters of ultimatum to the Viceroy in 1920 and in 1930—and for the same reasons. Thus was he hustled—we may be sure much against his own will—into a precipitate plan of losing all control over the mass movement of which he still remained the virtual and titular leader.

And to what end was he rushing with such headlong fury ? For what price would he give up the cherished raid ?

"But I would fain avoid a further step," wrote Mr. Gandhi in concluding this letter. "I would, therefore, ask you to remove the (salt) tax, which so many of your illustrous countrymen have condemned in unmeasured terms, and which, as you could not have failed to observe, has provoked universal protest and resentment, as expressed by civil disobedience".

Is it not surprising, indeed, that Mr. Gandhi should have been prepared to sell his birthright of passive rebellion for a veritable mess of pottage ? Had he not but two months ago invoked the matchless weapon of *Satyagraha* in the sacred name of the Freedom and Independence of India ? And had he not event while slipping away as usual from the high ideal stuck obstinately to his famous eleven points touching many aspects of national life ? Mr. Gandhi knew as well as anyone else that the laws of political dymanics would naturally compel him to take the forward step—such as he now contemplated—for the realisation of the great ideal of independence, if he was not to beat a premature and precipitate retreat. All that had happened in the intervening period of two months was an unparalleled exhibition of mass

militancy on the one hand, and Government repression on the other. Even the simplest rules of politics should have inspired any other leader to pitch his claims even higher than what he had done before. Mr. Gandhi, instead, chose to reduce his demands to a vanishing point and virtually offered to call a halt, if only one out of his eleven points was mercifully granted by the great Viceroy.

Shocking and shameful as these tactics appear according to the standards of political warfare, they were strangely enough in perfect harmony with Mr. Gandhi's own record of 1920-21-22. The movement of non-violent non-co-operation, the reader need hardly be reminded, had been designed for the fulfilment of three main objects, justice for Punjab, justice for Khilafat, and self-government for India. He nearly exhausted his vast vocabulary in English, Gujarati and Hindi, in carrying on a raging and tearing propaganda on these sovereign issues. Unlike 1930, however, the Government of Lord Reading was slow in taking drastic action during 1921. So the flow of Mr. Gandhi's rhetoric continued unchecked and unchanged...till the end of 1921. No sooner, however, the Government took up the big stick and marched leaders and lawyers, ladies and volunteers, to jail in their thousands than Mr. Gandhi began to sing a new tune. Punjab, Khilafat and Swaraj became back numbers. This issue of Czarist ordinances compelled Mr. Gandhi to limit his demands to the three elementary rights, as he called them...of free speech, free press and free association!

No wonder then that the same evil genius once again dogged Mr. Gandhi's footsteps. The Government offensive did not stiffen his back. It laid him low and left him grovelling instead. And the great Mahatma whom the millions of India loved to honour as their undaunted leader, and who had so eloquently moved the Resolution on India's independence a few five months ago, now begged of the Viceroy on bended knees to withdraw the salt act if he was to be prevented from taking the next logical step for the prosecution of much advertised campaign.

Rarely had great political leaders fallen so low...judged by their own words and standards.

And once again Government came to his rescue and saved him at the moment of his greatest political embarrassment by locking him up in jail. Hardly was the ink dry on the last words of the letter when policemen surrounded the Mahatma's cottage at midnight and marched him off to the train...Bombay and Yerawda. Thus was the curtain rung down on this chapter of Mr. Gandhi's criminal futilities...by Government.

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